Wednesday, December 28, 2011 ★★ Exactions / Vol. 27 / No. 20 P18 | Mobile Alerts: Text INQ DB BREAKING to 4407 | www.inquirer.net Twitter: @inquirerdotnet

₱500,000 bounty for capture of Palparan

GENERAL ON THE RUN Militants hold up wanted posters of retired Army Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. along the Philcoa pedestrian overpass at the entrance of UP Diliman in Quezon City where missing UP students Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan used to study before they were abducted in 2006. Palparan has gone into hiding after a judge issued a warrant for his arrest last week.

FOR LIMB BOUNTY, A2

By DJ Yap

A BOUNTY of ₱500,000 has been put up by the government for the capture of retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr., Interior Secretary Jesse Robredo said yesterday.

Palparan is the target of an arrest warrant issued by the Bulacan Regional Trial Court for his alleged involvement in the disappearance of two University of the Philippines student activists in 2006.

Robredo said in a text message that Justice Secretary Leila de Lima and the Department of the Interior and Local Government were "offering reward money of ₱5.5 million to anyone who will be able to provide information" leading to Palparan's arrest.

"We presume surrender (before) are nil," Robredo said when asked what prompted the raising of the bounty.

Questioned if this meant the Palparan camp had told

'Worst is yet to come'

Grimmer weather seen in next 10 yrs

By TJ Burgonio and Kristine L. Alave

THE COUNTRY hasn't seen the last of extreme weather events.

Climate projections for 2020 and 2050 by the weather bureau are even grimmer: The dry season would be drier and the wet season would be wetter, and the damage to crops and water sources would be far-reaching.

Mary Ann Lucille Sering, vice chair of the Climate Change Commission headed by President Aquino, said that worst-case projection were for 2020.

"But the weather is changing now," Sering said in an interview in the aftermath of the destruction wrought by Tropical Storm "Sendong" in Northern Mindanao.

"If we say we are racing against time, then technically, we can say that," she added.

In fact, the country is in the midst of an environmental turmoil and politicians should address this with urgency, said Rosa Perez, a climate scientist at the Manila Observatory.

"They think it is a future problem, but it is happening now," said Perez, lead author of a UN report on climate change adaptation and sustainability.

MORE! A16

DEADLY RIVER Flood victims land the Mandulog River in Iligan City after receiving relief goods on Christmas Day. The residents were forced to cross the still swollen river after Tropical Storm "Sendong" triggered flash floods that destroyed a nearby bridge.

New floods cause fear in South

By the Inquirer Visayas and Inquirer Mindanao

THOUSANDS of families in Mindanao and the Visayas have been evacuated to higher ground as incessant rains triggered flooding, causing fear among survivors of the deadly flash floods spawned by Tropical Storm "Sendong" 11 days ago.

No casualty was reported, but a 10-month-old boy went missing in Barangay San Roque in Surigao City.

In Iligan City, 59-year-old Alexander Buccahier was among as he monitored the Digkilaan River. Since Monday night, Buccahier said his family had been worrying about another flood because heavy rain had raised the river's water level, sending them, along with eight other families in Purok Riverside of

NEW FLOODS, A13

'Text' early warning system left unused, says Smart

By Paolo G. Montecillo and Dona Z. Pazzibugan in Manila and Cai Pardilla Inquirer Mindanao

THE GOVERNMENT failed to take advantage of an early warning system that could have been used to warn Cagayan de Oro and Iligan residents via short messaging service, or "text," of the onslaught of Tropical Storm "Sendong."

Flash floods triggered by Sendong claimed the lives of more than 1,200 people, mostly in the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan in Northern Mindanao. Hundreds remained missing.

The country's top telecom firms said the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) had failed to issue an advisory that would have prompted the companies to send messages urging people to flee their homes and seek higher ground before floods swept their low-lying communities.

"We already have that system in place. I am not aware of any attempt by the NDRRMC to use it during the [storm]," said Rafmen Liberto, spokesperson of leading mobile network Smart Communications.

Liberto said the early warning system via text, dubbed "4466," was established in June in response to the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan on

TEXT, A11

Bishop: Innocents' Day is no time for pranks

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A CATHOLIC bishop is reminding the faithful that the Holy Day of The Innocents being observed today is not an occasion to pull pranks on people.

Novaliches Bishop Emeritus Teodoro Bacani

BISHOP, A5

House finds lead lawyer for impeach panel

GUN-FREE NEW YEAR Police officers at Camp Karingal in Quezon City raise their pistols with barrels covered by packaging tapes on Tuesday. The Philippine National Police is working to stop the traditional celebratory gunfire during the New Year revelry that leaves several people killed and injured each year. (See story on Page A4.)

By Cynthia D. Balana and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE PANEL from the House of Representatives that will prosecute Chief Justice Renato Corona in his impeachment trial at the Senate has found a lead private counsel.

Iloilo Rep. Niel Tupas Jr., chief of the 11-member House prosecution panel, yesterday announced that Mario Bautista, managing partner of the Poblador Bautista and Reyes law office, would lead the private legal team that would supervise, direct, review and strategize for the panel.

It was Bautista, a seasoned litigation lawyer, who presented banker Clarissa Ocampo as a surprise witness during the impeachment trial of then President Joseph Estrada in 2000. (See it the Know on Page A6.)

Tupas said the panel had spent two weeks searching for private law firms and lawyers who would help in the

HOUSE, A6

WORLD
North Korea prepares lavish funeral / A22

ENTERTAINMENT
Memo from Big Boss: Stop talk of scandal / F1

BUSINESS
Ramon Ang in talks to buy PAL / B1

LIFESTYLE
How to be your own boss / E1

SPORTS
Lakers lose again / A16

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY A low Pressure Area was estimated at 155km East of Tarragona City. Southern Luzon and Visayas will have cloudy skies with scattered to widespread rain showers due to the low pressure area and the Northeast Monsoon. Elsewhere, cloudy skies with light rains. Moderate sea is mostly cloudy with scattered showers and thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Generally Fair	Isabela/Cauayan	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Aparri	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cubbao	Cloudy with Rains
Ilocos	Cloudy with Rains	Virac	Cloudy with Rains
Dagupan	Cloudy with Rains	Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains
Clark	Cloudy with Rains	Puerto Princesa	Mostly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Cuyo	Mostly Cloudy
Iloilo	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Mostly Cloudy
Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Mostly Cloudy
Davao	Cloudy with Rains	Surigao	Mostly Cloudy

2-3-D: 23 21 / 25 31 / 5 11
SUERTRES: 6 4 8 / 4 6 8 / 9 2 0
6/55 LOTTO: 4 18 23 34 35 39 — P8,234,500.60
SUPER LOTTO 6/49: 4 9 16 22 26 48 — P28,374,688.80
SIX DIGIT: 0 6 6 6 0 9

'Suspend me, suspend P-Noy'

Shun firecrackers, P-Noy urges New Year revelers

By Norman Bordadora and Jocelyn Uy

PRESIDENT Aquino in his New Year's message called on Filipinos to refrain from using firecrackers to usher in 2012.

"Now that our situation is becoming better, would you still use firecrackers with the name Goodbye Philippines + Goodbye (to) poverty?" President Aquino said.

"Wouldn't it be better to welcome the new year with 'goodbye kapatiran (charge)' and 'hello pagbabago (change)!'" he added.

"I love you now with this request. Let us all welcome the new year with noise—not from firecrackers—but from our collective shout for a cussing and anti-celebration," President Aquino said.

Safe method

President Aquino suggested that Filipinos just gather in parks and plazas to watch fireworks displays by local government units and the private sector.

"We can also make noise by using... horns and loud music. Those are safe methods," President Aquino said.

President Aquino said last year's New Year's revelry caused injuries to 1,202 due mostly to the use of firecrackers, indiscriminate firing of guns and pyrotechnic. The Chief Executive said he is fully supporting the Department of Health in its AFSR campaign (Aksyon Pagsuri Injury Reduction).

"The objective is to minimize the injuries and victims of fire during the celebration of the new year; to introduce a new way of celebration," President Aquino said.

Decline in cases

The Department of Health (DOH) late in the morning said 300 injuries from the use of firecrackers across the country in the last six days, noting a decline of cases from the same period last year.

According to the DOH, as of early morning yesterday, 113 firecracker-related injuries were reported to the health agency by at least 58 hospitals across the country. Of these numbers, seven cases were caused by stray bullets and one by firecracker poisoning.

Most of these cases—61 percent—were in Metro Manila, said the DOH in its daily report that began on Dec. 23. Most than half involved children between 1 to 10 years old.

At least 71 percent of these firecracker-related mishaps were caused by illegal fireworks, particularly by the "piccolo," a cheap firecracker.

Health Secretary Enrique Ona has repeatedly advised Filipino households to shun the use of firecrackers to prevent fire from.

Environment Secretary Ramon Paje also appealed to the public to refrain from using firecrackers because they pollute the environment.

He sought the help of parents and grandparents to prevent children from exploiting firecrackers.

Health hazards

Air pollution is a health hazard, particularly for children and senior citizens because of their fragile health condition, Paje said. "This is the season I am calling on parents and grandparents for their support and cooperation to—as much as possible—to die windows and "pakimbot" of our parents and grandparents," he added.

The Environment Secretary said fireworks and firecrackers emit thousands of tons of noxious gases into the atmosphere that can cause air pollution.

See DOH's campaign in clean Diwata Manila's atmosphere. With a report by Kristine Alave

Aquino adviser fights suspension on graft charges

ACOSTA

By Lolo B. Saberola

PRESIDENT Aquino's adviser on environmental protection is fighting a move to suspend him from office while his trial for graft is ongoing, saying that to do so would be tantamount to suspending Mr. Aquino himself.

Nonoy Acosta, in an opposition filed with the Sandiganbayan's Fourth Division, is contesting the preventive suspension which the Office of the Special Prosecutor said was mandatory under the antigraft law.

Acosta, also a board member of the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), is on trial for violation of the antigraft law over the alleged misuse of his Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) or pork barrel in 2008 and 2009 when he was the representative of Bukidnon in Congress.

Acosta is a member of the Liberal Party headed by President Aquino. He ran for senator in 2010 but lost.

President's alter-ego

In August this year, Mr. Aquino named him presidential adviser on environmental protection. In September this President appointed him to the board of the LLDA.

In his motion, Acosta said he was a presidential appointee and a member of the Cabinet, and people like him were in "a class by themselves." This means that he served at the pleasure of the President and was his alter-ego. He was not even covered by civil service rules, he said.

"As the alter-ego of the President, acosta cannot be suspended because to do so would be tantamount to suspending the President himself, and this contradicts upon his exclusive prerogative to appoint people whom he thinks are the best to advise him as head of state," Acosta said.

He said that since presidential appointees were not covered by civil service rules, only Mr. Aquino could suspend or fire them.

"It follows the suspension of presidential appointees is to hamper the day-to-day operations of the government to the detriment of public service."

Beyond court's power

Acosta said his appointment by Mr. Aquino was a political act, thus it was "beyond the power of the courts to rule upon, (nor)here such act is(will)even against."

He contended that the purpose of a preventive suspension would not be served by his temporary removal from office.

A preventive suspension is enforced to prevent an accused from tampering with evidence or intimidating witnesses, and to prevent him from committing further acts of maladministration.

Acosta said his case is "peculiar situation" because the purpose for a preventive suspension would not apply.

He said the prosecution of evidence by the prosecution in his trial was nearly complete so there was no reason to fear he would intimidate or influence witnesses.

As for documentary evidence, he said he could not tamper with them since they were in the government's possession.

He said he was also no longer a congressman and thus had no access to his former office or documents.

Not applicable

He said his being a Cabinet member who served at the pleasure of the President was preventive enough.

Acosta also averred that the provision in the antigraft law that mandates the suspension of officials charged with graft did not apply to him since the position he now held was different from the one he held when he allegedly committed the crime.

Corona impeachment is SC's 1st order of business in 2012

By Jovenro Being

THE FIRST order of business for the Supreme Court next year will be the various suits filed before it questioning the validity of the impeachment case lodged against Chief Justice Renato Corona by the House of Representatives.

Supreme Court spokesperson Ana Theresia Marquez said the four petitions filed by lawyers Oliver Lozano and Vladimir Enrique Cafiaje, the informer Danilo Ledesma and former Integrated Bar of the Philippines president Vicente Millora would be tackled by the court sitting en banc on Jan. 17.

"All the justices have been given copies of the petitions and they are now studying them. Let's see how the court will act when they resume sessions next month," Marquez said.

He did not rule out the issuance of a temporary restraining order on the impeachment proceedings which are set to begin in the Senate on Jan. 16.

Four petitions

Aside from issuing a TRO, Marquez said the high court could consolidate the four petitions or require the respondents to answer them.

Marquez declined to discuss the plan of the House prosecution team to compel Associate Justice Presbitero Velasco Jr. and Chiefs of Court Theodore Vidal to testify before the senators who will sit as an impeachment court.

"Let's wait for the moment. Let's see how the court will answer," he said.

In another development, Solicitor General Jose Anselmo Cadiz and four former internal members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) expressed support for Corona's impeachment.

"We express our collective sense that the forthcoming impeachment trial of Chief Justice Corona would be healthy for our democracy. As we await the unfolding drama, let us not lose sight of some basic principles. Let us come out of this experience a stronger and better nation," they said in a two-page manifesto.

Besides Cadiz, who was IBP president from 2000 to 2006, other ex-presidents who signed the manifesto were Raoul Angangco (1993-1997), Jose Cuaplao (1997-1998), Arthur Lim (1998-2001) and Teodulo Palandoy (2001-2003).

No sacred cow

"No one in the public service is a sacred cow. Everyone in government, including high officials removable only by impeachment, is ultimately answerable to the sovereign people from whom all governmental authority emanates," they said.

Cadiz et al. thus contradicted the stand taken by incumbent IBP president Roan Libarios and the organization's current directors who, in a statement issued on Dec. 14, expressed their "grave concern" over the "breakneck" impeachment of Corona, saying it subverted the constitutional allocation of powers and prerogatives in the Supreme Court.

The former IBP leaders said that while the primacy of the law and the separation of powers should be respected, "we must realize and accept that the rule of law and the doctrine of separation of powers do not mean, nor require, that the Chief Justice shall be immune from criticism, or impeachment."

RELIEF FOR 'SENDONG' VICTIMS

More foreign aid pours in

MORE foreign aid, corporate donations, and contributions from overseas Filipinos continue to pour in for the victims of Tropical Storm "Sendong."

Switzerland has donated 300,000 Swiss francs (about P14 million) to support the rehabilitation efforts particularly in the devastated cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

The DFA also said the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation would dispatch a four-man team of water and sanitation experts to the flood-ravaged areas.

A low-ranking OIC delegation headed by Fuad Ali Al-Mukirnee, director general for humanitarian affairs, arrived in Cagayan de Oro City on Dec. 26 for a four-day visit to assess the devastation and see where exactly can the member-countries help.

OIC aid

Earlier, Swiss President Micheline Calmy Rey wrote President Aquino to express sympathy for the calamity victims. In 2009, the Swiss government gave a total of 1.5 million Swiss francs in the aftermath of Tropical Storm "Ondoy."

The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) has called on its 57 member-states to help the Philippines in the post-calamity rehabilitation program, the DFA also reported.

First for OIC

Foreign Undersecretary Rafael Seguis said it was the "first time the OIC had dispatched a needs-assessment mission to the Philippines" to see how the organization can help affected communities in Mindanao, as directed by "no less than OIC Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu."

"The Philippines appreciates this kind of gesture from our brothers in the OIC," Seguis said.

The OIC members include, among others, Cameroon, Nigeria, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Albania, Uganda, Pakistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei, Malaysia, Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Turkey, Russia, Syria, Oman, Algeria, and Egypt.

The Philippine Embassy in Tel Aviv and Filipino groups based in Israel have also raised some $900 for Sendong victims, the foreign affair added.

Two organizations of overseas Filipino workers in Afghanistan also donated P50,000. The groups—Pinoy Workers and Filipinos in Afghanistan (PAC)—sent the money to the Philippine Red Cross, said PAC spokesperson Emmanuel Soriano.

Shandrew Corp. of Japan will donate 18 million yen (P6.6 million) to the relief effort, the company said in a statement on Monday.

The two Philippine companies under the Shandrew group are also extending assistance to the victims. These are San Roque Power, which has donated P1.5 million through the ABS-CBN Foundation Sagip Kapamilya, and Team Energy, which is donating P1 million.

Globe relief

Shandrew has been operating in the Philippines since 1989, with investments in power generation, industrial estates and construction machinery.

Globe Telecom employees worked through Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to distribute relief goods to those hard-hit in Iligan and Cagayan de Oro. Globe Globe volunteers helped pack relief goods, while the company's Libreng Tawag [free call] facilities also continued operations through the Christmas weekend.

"The Christmas season provided (our) employees with the opportunity to demonstrate compassion (those who need it the most. We have been blessed with employees who embraced the spirit of social responsibility and who generously augmented the funds from Globe earmarked for relief efforts," said Bob Small, head of the company's corporate social responsibility flagship program, Globe Bridging Communities.

The telecom giant said its relief efforts had reached over 3,000 families in Dumaguete, Cagayan de Oro and Iligan, with cash donations alone reaching more than P1 million raised from company funds and employee contributions. Jerry E. Esplanada, Philip C. Fabeza, and Amy R. Byrne

4 LP bets running for Senate in 2013

By Norman Bordadora

ASAD

PRESIDENT Aquino expects three of his Liberal Party mates who lost in the 2010 senatorial race to make another run for the upper chamber in 2013.

In an interview with ANC-CBN News Channel anchor Lynda Jurilla, Mr. Aquino said he would be disappointed if former Akbayan party-list Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel did not make another attempt at a Senate seat.

He said the same for Commission on Elections Commissioner Ruffy Biazon and Deputy Ombudsman Emilio Gonzalez III.

The time around, Mr. Aquino said, Budget Secretary Florencio Abad should also be one of the LP's senatorial bets.

The President said that while the slate would include youth, dancer-turned-politician Jericho Rosales is not in the coalition with the LP. It would be difficult to include both Rosales and Vice President Jejomar Binay's 2004 ally, even if Binay was an administration ally.

Binay ran in 2010 against the LP vice presidential candidate Mar Roxas when he handily defeated.

Mr. Aquino said he tabbed Abad due to 2013 he would be the budget secretary's campaign manager.

Abad, a ranking LP official, was Mr. Aquino's campaign manager in 2007 when the latter lost his senatorial bid.

To get back at Abad, the President said that as his manager he would schedule 22 engagements a day for Abad, a schedule that would be more hectic than the 20-hour day the budget secretary gave Mr. Aquino in 2010.

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PNP CHIEF'S WARNING

Fire guns and be fired, cops told

By DJ Yap

TRIGGER HAPPY police officers who fire their guns during the New Year merrymaking would be dismissed outright from the service, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said on Tuesday.

PNP Director General Nicanor A. Bartolome ordered police stations nationwide to strictly enforce the prohibition on officers firing their guns to greet the new year.

"On top of the dismissal charges [they will face], an administrative rule I want these policemen to be charged. They have to be immediately removed immediately from the police service," he said.

"What they're doing has nothing to do with their job. Not only do they put others in harm's way they violate specific laws, and therefore they have to be dismissed immediately from the service," Bartolome told reporters.

The PNP chief led the criminal lodging of the branches of policemen's firearms at Camp Crame, as operations aimed at ensuring that members of the 140,000-strong force would refrain from discharging their guns as the year turns over.

Many deaths and injuries around the New Year's celebrations are caused by stray bullets, after firecrackers, fireworks and other explosives fall to the ground.

Bartolome said he had been noticing plenty of loud noise on the news year would bring good fortune.

"It's only a reminder—it's not that we do not trust our policemen but it's because we want them to be reminded always," Bartolome said.

The sign of the policemen's gun barrels were sealed with masking tape and signed by their unit commanders with a felt pen. A break in the signatures would indicate the gun may have been fired.

Aside for private gun owners who fire their arms, Bartolome said they would face cancellation of their license and permit to carry.

"This serves as a warning not only to our police officers but also to everyone who owns a gun," he said.

SPECIAL DAY FOR SPECIAL NEEDS
Special children from Payatas, Quezon City, marvel at a giant merry-go-riding overhead at the square here during a trip on Dec. 17 to the Manila Ocean Park at the Rizal Park in Manila. More than a hundred special children—either students of the Payatas B SPED Elementary School or patients of its community-based Rehabilitation Center—were treated to a day-long party and gift-giving by the Philippine Airlines Foundation. The day included a trip to the Manila Ocean Park as part of the PAL Foundation's annual Christmas celebration for indigent children.

Sokor fugitive gives BI the slip

By Jerome Aning

A SOKOR Korean fugitive from the law on his country is being hunted by the Bureau of Immigration (BI) after he escaped from the agency's custody on Saturday while confined at St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City.

Lawyer Maria Antoinette Bonaan-Mangoloang, acting BI intelligence chief, said she assigned a team to track down Kim Sue Hong on instructions of Immigration Commissioner Ricardo David Jr.

Mangoloang also appealed to the public for information on Kim's whereabouts.

Likewise looking for the Korean are the Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, and Malacañang Presidential Security Group.

Mangoloang said an investigation was underway to find out how Kim was able to escape from the BI detention center in Bicutan, Taguig.

She said the jail guards had been placed under preventive suspension while the investigation was ongoing.

The 54-year-old Kim was brought to St. Luke's on Aug. 26 and confined after the completion of hypertension, diabetes and abdominal pain.

The Korean was arrested by the BI fugitive search unit on July 5 in Pasig City on the request of the Korean embassy.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

DECEMBER 28 (Wednesday)
Feast: Feast
Holy Innocents
Ps: I Jn 1:5-2:2, Ps 124:2-5, 7a&8
Our soul has escaped like a bird from the hunter's snare.

1st Reading: 1 Jn 1:5-2:2

The heard his message from him and announce to you: God is light and there is no darkness in him. If we say we are in fellowship with him, while we walk in darkness, we lie instead of living in truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we are in fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son of God, purifies us from all sin.

If we say, "We have no sin," we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we do not sin, we make God a liar and his word is not in us.

My little children, I write to you that you may not sin; but if anyone does, we have an intercessor with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just One. He is the sacrificial victim for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

Gospel: Mt 2:13-18

After the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you for Herod will search for the child to destroy him."

Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. In this way what the Lord had said through the prophet was fulfilled: I called my son out of Egypt.

When Herod found out that the Magi were tricked by the wise men, he was furious. He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and the neighborhood who were 2 years old or under. This was done in the time which he had learned from the wise men about the time when the star appeared.

In this way what the prophet Jeremiah had said was fulfilled: A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation. Rachel weeps for her children. She refuses to be comforted, for they are no more.

Reflection

The Holy Innocents were actually the first gospel martyrs. They died because of Herod's fear and they knew not why. Jesus also died because of the evil he, the wise innocents was also slaughtered too. The big difference was that Jesus offered himself to be a victim of man's hate but he achieved himself like a meek lamb because of his love for his brother and all of us.

Christian Communication Foundation, Inc., 4 Mercury Dr. cor Calaunan, Quezon City, 1112 and Makati 1201 Quezon City. Tel. No. (02) 411-2000 Fax No. (02) 411-2000 e-mail: ccfi@philippinecross.org Editorial Assistance by the Philippine Daily Inquirer

Malacañang releases ₱240M for housing of Iligan victims

By Norman Bordadora and TJ Burgonio

YOUR WELLS, one toilet, one stove."

This was how a Palace official described the temporary lodgings awaiting some of the families displaced by Tropical Storm "Sendong," as Malacañang yesterday announced the release of more than ₱200 million for the construction of core shelters on a 10-hectare relocation site in Iligan City.

Edwin Lacierda, spokesperson for President Aquino, said a check for ₱241,200,000 had been issued over to Iligan City Mayor Lawrence Cruz through Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman.

"The money will go to the construction of the core shelters. By core shelters we mean four-walls, one-toilet and one-room," Lacierda said in a briefing.

He said Soliman, Health Secretary Enrique Ona and Communication Secretary Herminio "Sonny" Coloma had gone to Iligan City to personally oversee reconstruction and relief efforts in the devastated areas.

Lacierda said the shelter project was expected to benefit 3,459 families in Iligan.

The government is also building bunkhouses for the thousands of evacuees in Cagayan de Oro following reports that they would be moving out of the public schools and stay in semi-tribal camps around mid-week.

Soliman said the original ₱7.3 million budgeted over to the military's National Development Support Command to build bunkhouses for Sendong victims in Cagayan de Oro.

At least 10 bunkhouses are expected to be built there before the end of the month. Costing ₱550,000 each, a bunkhouse will have 12 rooms (at one room per family), a kitchen and latrines, she said.

When shown evasive on Jan. 7, evacuees staying in school buildings would have to move to tents, according to Benito Ramos, executive director of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development has also begun distributing family server cards to flood victims in a move to stop bogus claimants of relief goods.

"The family server cards will be given to those who had been interviewed and verified as among those affected by Sendong. We are coordinating with concerned local government units for the issuance of the server cards," Soliman said.

Also in Iligan, the city government said it expected the local economy to recover in three months but that it might take much longer for the lives of affected residents to return to normal.

Melvin Alagpul, the city administrator's officer, said the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure was now underway with the help of the ₱60-million fund given by President Aquino—funding his source said to the city.

Alagpul said the city government hoped to move displaced residents from the evacuation centers to their new homes before the end of the month or in early January. "The houses can be rebuilt but the psychological and emotional impact of the disaster would be difficult to deal with," he said. With a report from Jhiz N. Hal, Inquirer Mindanao

Bishop says Holy Day of Innocents no time for pranks

From page A1

noted that many Filipino Catholics had come to associate the feast following Christmas with April Fool's Day because of the word "innocent," which in the Bible refers to infants and young children but to Filipinos may also mean "gullible" or "naïve."

"Filipinos think that when one is innocent, he or she only is fool," Bacani said in a phone interview with reporters yesterday.

The bishop explained that the feast also known as Nihon Innocentes was not an excuse to play practical jokes but a commemoration of the Biblical story where King Herod of Judea ordered the massacre of all male children below 2 years old in the town of Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, three wise men, or Magi, had come to Herod in their search for the newborn Jesus, and asked the king of Israel about the child. Threatened by the infant whom the Magi called the "King of the Jews," Herod asked them to return to him after identifying the boy so that he, too, could "worship Him."

The Magi, warned in a dream of Herod's real intentions to kill the infant, took a different route on their way back to avoid betraying the child. Enraged, Herod ordered the slaughter.

The slaughtered children were considered the first martyrs for Christ, Bacani said, citing the main reason that the occasion should be treated with reverence.

Some prelates, however, consider that pranksters on Innocents' Day has become customary among Catholics that it may now be difficult to stamp out.

They continue to encourage churchgoers to deepen their understanding of the feast, which was instituted by the Latin Church sometime in the 4th or 5th Century and traditionally celebrated on Dec. 28.

But good practices, they said, would be to bring infants to church to be blessed on this day. With a report from Inquirer Research

INTEGRATED BAR OF THE PHILIPPINES

UPHOLD THE CONSTITUTION, PROTECT JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

The IBP, through its Board of Governors, reiterates its unanimous stand that the breakneck impeachment of the Chief Justice by the House of Representatives thwarts the Constitution and the Rule of Law.

With all due respect, the House, in exercising its sole constitutional prerogative of impeachment, failed to faithfully comply with the required processes prescribed by the Constitution and its own rules on impeachment. As a result, the impeachment complaint has become a congressional *faux pas* in form and substance.

First: Based on public admissions, the complainants signed the 57-page complaint without reading and appreciating its contents and supporting documents, thereby violating the Constitution itself. Under the Constitution, an impeachment may only be initiated by a verified complaint, which means that its signatories must form their own *belief* as to its truthfulness based on actual reading and appreciation of its contents and supporting documents. But the complaint, as shown by admissions, was presented during a brief caucus as a *done deal*. No individual copies were distributed; no discussions held. Only a brief power point summary was dished out. The signatories then lined up and took their turns in signing the lone copy, without reading and evaluating the contents and documents. After gathering 188 signatures in blitz, the complaint was whisked to the Senate without any discussion.

Second: To instantly signing and elevating the complaint for Senate trial without reading its contents and subjecting it to any discussion, the complainants violated due process and their own duty to make a determination of its sufficiency in form and substance and the existence of probable cause. While 188 legislators constitute more than 1/3 of the House, such number merely disposes with the required referral of the impeachment complaint to the Justice Committee but NOT their solemn duty to make their own determination of the sufficiency of the complaint and probable cause so to warrant Senate trial. Such preliminary determination by the complainants *strikes at the heart of due process*; it cannot be satisfied without actual reading and appreciation, if not discussion, of the complaint and supporting documents.

Third: The impeachment complaint also failed to comply with the prescribed processes in verifying its due execution. The blitzkrieg filing of the complaint shackled the House Sec-Gen from faithfully complying with the processes of verification, which would require the 188 signatories of the complaint to individually appear, raise their right hand and declare under oath its due execution and their own belief on the correctness of the allegations based on reading and appreciation of the documents, and, thereafter, affix their signatures (for the second time) as proof of verification. The verification process of 188 declarants cannot be dispensed with or cramped in blitz. The complaint itself does not bear the certificate of acknowledgement by the House Sec-Gen as proof of his faithful compliance with the verification process.

But far more telling and serious are the defects in the substance of the impeachment complaint.

First: The grounds invoked in the impeachment complaint subvert the constitutional guarantees of separation of powers and judicial independence, the first principles of the Rule of Law. The Chief Justice is impeached for grounds involving collegial resolutions of the entire Court in cases elevated for review. The complaint even includes a number of SC rulings still pending reconsideration, which clearly reeks of undue interference in the disposition of pending cases. Even the other grounds on the SALN and IDF collections also trend on collegial practices involving assertions of judicial autonomy, which neither the COA nor the Ombudsman has disallowed.

By indicting the Chief Justice for alleged *political bias over collegial decisions and without any allegation of financial or illegal consideration involved*, then the House – a full-blooded political assembly – has just elevated its status, *without rewriting the Constitution*, into a higher judicial body, a *super Supreme Court*, overturning judicial decisions for alleged "political bias" and enforcing sanction via impeachment. Thus, on trial is not only Chief Justice Renato Corona but the constitutionally protected *power of judicial review*, the very weapon designed to check potential excesses or hegemony by Congress and the President in the exercise of their legislative and governing powers.

While the President may have valid issues against the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court, the resort to blitzkrieg impeachment for imputed "political bias" erodes, rather than strengthens, the Rule of Law. If the Chief Justice can be validly impeached for collegial decisions (including pending cases) for "political bias" and hauled to the Senate to undergo the rigors of political trial, *all by a mere stroke of 1/3 signatures of the House gathered in blitz*, then the Supreme Court will never be the same again, its judicial independence defanged, and its magistrates – including their decisions – now at the mercy of the political bidding, if not power plays, of the ruling House majority and the President. The chilling effect and damage to judicial independence would be like typhoon *Sendong* – devastating, long-term, and incalculable.

Second: The impeachment complaint also trifles with and violates the constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the law and due process, the first principles in our Bill of Rights. The complaint clearly and repeatedly delves on collegial decisions and collegial practices of the Supreme Court. Yet, only one of its members, who happens to be the Chief Justice, is being singled out, even if he neither penned the assailed decisions nor changed his position (flip-flop) on the merits of the cases. If the impeachment seeks to enforce public accountability over decisions of the Court now assailed as unconstitutional, why charge and indict only the Chief Justice and exclude the others?

Jurisprudence proclaims that *selective prosecution* smacks of *persecution*, which cannot be sustained without thrashing the constitutional guarantees of equal application of the law and substantive due process. If the Chief Justice of the land can be singled-out for liability over collegial decisions and brazenly denied the constitutional guarantees to equal protection of the law and due process, what more for ordinary members of the judiciary and citizens of the land? Has not the barefaced disregard of well-entrenched constitutional guarantees transmogrified the impeachment process from being an avatar of public accountability into a political goblin for partisan ends?

Thus, for the guidance of the bar and the public, the IBP, through its Board of Governors, stands firm on its position that the impeachment complaint runs afoul with the Constitution in form and substance. But in defining its course of action, the IBP has also resolved to refrain from intervening as counsel or litigant in the Senate impeachment trial or in the certiorari proceedings before the Supreme Court (even if it did so in the impeachment case of then Chief Justice Hilario Davide). In refusing to intervene as litigant or counsel in the pending proceedings, the IBP is giving premium to the need to maintain its institutional independence and integrity and avoid being drawn into divisive political alignments.

But the IBP cannot also afford to stay in the comfort zones of non-involvement while the independence of the judiciary is being torpedoed by a misguided and defective congressional action that threatens to shake the foundations of our democracy. As sentinel of law and democracy, the IBP is duty bound to engage the people and other stakeholders of the justice system to rally and defend the judicial independence of the Supreme Court, the bedrock of the Rule of Law.

To fulfill this duty, the Board has resolved to establish – a) an *IBP Impeachment Communications Group* manned by volunteer lawyers to inform the public on the breakneck impeachment and its adverse impact on the constitutional guarantees of separation of powers, judicial independence and the Rule of Law; and b) an *IBP Impeachment WatchA* to closely monitor the developments on the impeachment case before the Supreme Court and the Senate.

Finally, we call on our people and the stakeholders of the justice system to pay the price of vigilance. On trial now is not only the judicial independence of the Supreme Court. It is our own commitment to the supremacy of the Constitution, the Rule of Law and political democracy.

Relief ship breaks down

By Jerome Aning

A PHILIPPINE Coast Guard (PCG) vessel on its way to Caspiran de Dios in bring relief goods broke down near Mindoro island on Saturday.

The BRP Pampanga, a search-and-rescue vessel, limped back to the Batangas port where it is currently being repaired.

PCG spokesperson Lt. Cmdr. Edgar Bradbrain said the Pampanga experienced problems in its fuel system on Saturday night.

"They tried to fix it during the voyage but they realized that spare parts may be needed. So when they reached Mindoro, they decided to go to Batangas port so that the ship would be repaired well," Bradbrain told reporters.

The coast guard official said the PCG was considering to transfer the relief goods being carried by Pampanga to the next available vessel.

Special cargo vessel departing Batangas. However, Bradbrain said the commercial vessel would take five days to reach Caspiran de Oro.

"It must be needed to pass provinces such as Masbate and Cebu," he said.

"If the Pampanga would be fixed by Thursday it will just take 3-4 hours to reach Caspiran de Oro," Bradbrain said.

Jehovah's Witnesses convention winding up

THE LAST of the 11 consecutive three-day weekend conventions on "Isa' God's Kingdom Come" will be held from Friday to Sunday at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in Barangay Kaligayahan, Novaliches, Quezon City.

Started on Oct. 21, the convention will follow up on the theme that "God's Kingdom is a real government by which God's purpose for the Earth will be carried out," the Jehovah's Witnesses said in a press statement.

On Dec. 30, the subject of "How God's Kingdom will come?" will be explored in the part of the program that dwells on "What will go when God's Kingdom Comes?"

On Dec. 31, a discussion of the importance of Christian baptism and how one qualifies to receive the blessings of God's Kingdom will be capped by an ordination of new members of the faith as ministers.

On Jan. 1, the convention will wind up with an address, "God's kingdom will crush all other kingdoms—When?"

P-Noy keen on new CJ in Sereno mold–Palace

P-NOY'S TYPE Associate Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno (right) poses with President Aquino and Chief Justice Renato Corona after her oath-taking in Malacañang on Aug. 16, 2010. MALACAÑANG

By Norman Bordadora

THE CHIEF Justice that President Aquino is looking for is in the mold of Associate Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno, his spokesperson said yesterday.

Edwin Lacierda said the President is looking for a "legal scholar" to be his possible replacement for Chief Justice Renato Corona, whose impeachment trial is to start in the Senate in January.

"We're just preparing for a contingency," he said of prospects in the event Corona is convicted.

The list is only for the President's appreciation, Lacierda said. "He is not a lawyer; he needs to rely on his legal team."

Lacierda said Mr. Aquino "needs someone of the likes of Justice Sereno" who, he said, was "not known to the President."

He has since been quoted by Malacañang as defending the administration's position against allowing Arroyo to travel abroad.

Independent JBC

Lacierda stressed that the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC), which is mandated by the Constitution to screen nominees to the judiciary, was not convening for the possible replacement of the Chief Justice.

"Let me be clear. The JBC is independent from the executive branch in terms of their workings," he said, adding:

"The President did not instruct the JBC. The President instructed his legal advisers to coordinate with the a removal of the Chief Justice, to look for a Chief Justice. Let me clarify: There is still no short list yet."

Lacierda said the President would "look into the qualifications" of those listed to determine "if there are people who are worthy to be members of the Supreme Court, making sure that they are men and women of probity, integrity and independence."

Asked if the President would consider a nonmember of the high court for the post of Chief Justice, he said Mr. Aquino "has mentioned that he is open to an outsider."

Only three of the 15 magistrates of the high court are appointees of Mr. Aquino—Sereno, Bienvenido Reyes and Estela Perlas-Bernabe.

Sereno was among those who dissented from the majority decision in November granting a temporary restraining order on the hold departure order issued by Justice Secretary Leila de Lima.

She and the President would "look into the qualifications" of those listed to determine "if there are people who are worthy to be members of the Supreme Court, making sure that they are men and women of probity, integrity and independence."

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House finds lead lawyer for impeach panel

From page A1

prosecution. He said many private lawyers had admitted to finding it difficult to go against the Supreme Court.

"Frankly, we were able to talk to Bautista. So will form his impeach staff un-ang of the right private legal teams that will help prosecute each article of impeachment," Tupas said.

Lawyer Valentina Cruz, spokesperson of the impeachment court, said reporters that Corona's impeachment trial would proceed as scheduled in January despite his "prayer" that the impeachment complaint against him be dismissed for supposed constitutional infirmity.

Cruz said Corona's response and the articles of impeachment amounted to "allegations" at this point and would have to be evaluated based on evidence.

"Since it's the Chief Justice who is the defendant, it is his interest that he would pray for the dismissal of the complaint," she said.

"But that doesn't mean that the Senate will act upon it just like that because the Senate has to conduct the trial," she added.

Senate Majority Leader Vicente Sotto III said Corona's reply to the impeachment complaint would "take its natural course" and would be decided on by the senators sitting as judges in the impeachment court.

IN THE KNOW

SALTISTA

FOR HIS role in the aborted impeachment trial of then President Joseph Estrada 11 years ago, lawyer Rico Bautista was commended by then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2004.

"He helped [set] the tide of history as private prosecutor when he presented Clarissa Ocampo as the key witness in the trial of the century. Congratulations to you, Mon," Arroyo said in a speech during the 2004 homecoming dinner of the University of the Philippines Diliman.

Bautista, an associate of Bautista Lozada Kalaw Tibay & Reyes law firm, admitted he confided to Del. T. Tibay, with Alexander Poblador and Gilbert Raymund Reyes.

His fields of legal practice are civil, commercial and criminal litigation, insurance, banking, securities and finance, mining, taxation.

Bautista has been named a leading individual lawyer by Asialaw Profiles, Legal 500 (Asia Pacific) Asia's Leading Lawyers for Business, and Who's Lawyer in the areas of dispute resolution, banking and finance, capital markets, corporate/mergers and acquisitions, securities and finance, IT solutions and media, labor and employment and restructuring, and insolvency and bankruptcy.

He is affiliated with the Order of the Purple Feather, the honorary society of the UP College of Law, and is a member of the Phi Sigma Mu international society. He was chapter director of the integrated Bar of the Philippines in 1988.

Ben Rosario, Inquirer Research
Assistant Inquirer Archives
Publisher Beatriz A. Reyes
article is

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Ben Rosario, Inquirer Research
Assistant Inquirer Archives
Publisher Beatriz A. Reyes
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No signature

Marikina City Rep. Romero Quimbo, the spokesperson of the House prosecution panel, said the Senate should dismiss Corona's 79-page answer to the impeachment complaint because it was not duly verified but also "defective" in that it lacked his signature.

"It is effectively waiving his answer to answer and counter-act the allegations against him," Quimbo said in a press conference.

"It is ironic that he is accusing us of not verifying the case and not us in the complaints when he himself did not sign his answer, as required in any court documents. Only his lawyers signed it for him," he said.

The prosecution panel is expected to submit its formal reply to Corona's answer on Jan. 2.

Quimbo also said Corona should consider the "mistake" of taking a leave of absence.

"We urge the Chief Justice to go on leave. I think this is the decent thing to do. He is a lawyer. The prosecutors think that it is inconsistent on him to go on leave so that the Supreme Court as an institution will not be abused or misused by [him] to protect him, self," Quimbo said, noting that the high tribunal's spokesperson, Jose Midas Marquez, "is defending the Chief Justice in this issue in his individual capacity."

And if the Senate would impose a gag order on House members, Quimbo said, it would also be proper that court employees should not be allowed to speak out in Corona's defense.

Restitution

Quimbo said loan of contribution from Corona and his allies were to be "real and imminent" that the House prosecution panel, if decided to keep the identities of the witnesses' lawyers secret while preparing for the Senate trial.

He said Senators had agreed to lend the prosecution team services as private experts.

Bautista, described as "one of the country's best litigators," was reportedly the subject of a tug-of-war between the prosecution and the defense panels last week.

"He sought him out for quite a time and we dated that he accepted to serve our country again. With him leading our group, we are even more confident that we will get a conviction of the Chief Justice," Quimbo said.

According to Quimbo, Corona obviously considered the impeachment trial a serious threat to his term, which is to end in 2018, when he "obtained the more expensive lawyers in town for his defense."

Corona's defense team is led by retired Associate Justice Serafin Cuevas, with Antonio Bautista Jr., Jose Roy III, Jacinto Jimenez, Orlando Manalo and Norman Lithuanio II as initial members.

Quick trial

Sen. Joker Arroyo is anticipating a relatively quick trial, with the positions of the prosecution and the defense "defined, and the issues crystallized" by January.

"With that, the Senate should be able to make a ruling, whether it is conviction or acquittal, and finish the trial in one month," Arroyo said in a statement.

"Unless the parties intended to extraneous matters and grandstand, and the Senate tolerates it, the trial should be straightforward and brief," he said.

"The people and the government have other more important things to attend to than get fixated on the trial's sometimes mere value."

Cruz said the senator-judges would decide on the charges against Corona only after the prosecution and the defense panels presented their respective evidence during the trial.

She said they could not decide on Corona's response or the prosecution's charges, because these were "mere allegations if that's how he pleases to do the course of the trial."

Arroyo said the articles of impeachment were "not complicated at all" as they were "essentially anchored on public documents" such as Supreme Court decisions.

"The allegations in the articles of impeachment revolve mainly around questions of law and hardly around facts," he said.

"Questions of law are resolved on the basis of the legal arguments of each side. Questions of fact are resolved through evidence, testimonial or documentary."

'It's nothing'

Members of the prosecution panel belittled Corona's reply to the impeachment complaint.

"Ah wala naman 'yun (It's nothing)," Tupas told the lawyers, adding that Corona "did not directly answer [the allegations]" and was only "trying to resort to legal technicalities ... in order to avoid public accountability."

"We are looking forward to the trial in the Senate to bid the truth and to finally be able to prove a case," he said. "We are confident that we have a strong case against the Chief Justice," Tupas said.

Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares said Corona's answer "confirms our urgent reasons for the Jan. 16 [rally]."

"We will argue that the trial should proceed because the Senate has jurisdiction, and that the claim that the Chief Justice cannot be convicted merely because the decision [on the impeachment complaint] is timed, because the Constitution requires such. Supreme Court justice to be independent and impartial," he said.

Colmenares said the issue was whether Chief Justice Corona was biased in favor of former President and now Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

He said the fact that the other justices might also be partial did not save the accused from being convicted of partiality and administrative case, a lawyer's guide.

With a report from Christine L. Figueroa

₱500,000 bounty for capture of Palparan

From page A1

ment he would no longer give up, Robredo said: "Not really. He's after a week, unless he communicates with the government again, we presume he is not surrendering anymore."

Philippine National Police Director General Nicanor Bartolome told reporters the information the PNP had gathered showed that Palparan was still in the country.

He would not reply categorically when asked whether Palparan was in Cotoco, Visayas or Mindanao, saying only that "the important thing is by hot we tell the country."

Asked if Palparan's arrest was imminent, Bartolome replied: "Hopefully."

He said the PNP was treating each piece of information carefully and that the reward money should encourage people to help flush him out.

Bartolome's assurance

Bartolome said the Palparan camp had sought the PNP's assurance he would be in safe hands if he is taken into custody.

Emissaries for Palparan wanted an assurance his custody would not be compromised, Bartolome said. "We cannot throw that. He will be properly secured," he said.

He said Palparan, who had gone into hiding since the case surfaced, by arrest in connection with the disappearance of activists Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan, had no reason to fear for his life if he surrendered to the PNP custody.

Bartolome confirmed receiving feelers from Palparan's camp about his possible surrender.

"Yes, we have also received surrender feelers. We are talking to some people," Bartolome said. "We will always give this consideration, all this information we are getting from the community and from those who would like to negotiate."

'We'll find him'

Bartolome said the commander had been talking to his subordinates but not directly to him.

"We're always hopeful that he will come out to face the charges. If not, we will find him," Bartolome said.

Malacañang welcomed Palparan's reported surrender feelers.

"It will certainly ease the burden of looking for [Palparan] if he would voluntarily surrender to people he is comfortable with," said presidential spokesperson Edwin Lacierda.

In a motion filed on Dec. 22, Palparan asked the court to recall the arrest warrant and hold-departure order issued against him and to conduct a new preliminary investigation of his case for kidnapping and serious illegal detention.

Palparan claim

In the motion filed by lawyer Nasser Mallaren, Palparan said the charges against him were not clear for which he and his cohorts were investigated by the prosecutors.

Palparan said he and other accused were investigated for rape, serious physical injuries, arbitrary detention, malicious arrest of prisoners, grave threats, grave coercion and violation of the international convention against torture.

He said the filing of the cases against them "reeks of persecution."

"Clearly, [our] rights to due process and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation against [us] were violated," he said.

Prosecutor Juan Nieves Jr. joined Palparan's claims, saying: "There's no persecution. We gave him and the other respondents every opportunity to answer the charges[.]"

Cadapan, Empeño, and a certain Manuel Merino were abducted by suspected military men in Hagonoy, Bulacan, in June 2006 on suspicion they were members of the communist New People's Army.

Fearing Palparan had already left for abroad, the migrant rights group Migrante urged the authorities to put him on international manhunt list.

With reports from Jerome Aning, Norman Bordadora and Philip C. Tubeo in Manila, and Carmelo Reyes-Estrope, Inquirer Central Luzon

Army takes custody of Palparan's 2 coaccused

CITY OF MALOLOS—Two reassured, of retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. have been transferred to the custody of the Philippine Army after they expressed fear for their safety at a Bulacan jail where suspended criminals and communist rebels are detained.

Lt. Col. Felipe Anotado and S/Sgt Edgardo Osorio, along with Palparan, are facing charges of kidnapping and serious illegal detention in connection with the 2006 disappearance of two University of the Philippines activists.

Anotado and Osorio surrendered to Army authorities in Camp Aguinaldo on Dec. 20, but they were later brought to the Bulacan provincial jail. Palparan and another coaccused remain at large.

During the custody hearing in court on Dec. 23, Anotado and Osorio's lawyer, Atty. Al Jerwin Paguinto, argued that placing his clients in a civilian jail with criminals and suspected New People's Army rebels would endanger their lives.

Security

"Taking into consideration the security of the lives of the accused in a Bulacan provincial jail, which cannot be guaranteed by anyone, [my clients] request that the custody of the accused be given to the jail warden of the Philippine Army ... located in Fort Bonifacio," Paguinto said.

Judge Teodoro Gonzales granted the petition.

Court employees said Anotado and Osorio were transferred to Fort Bonifacio on Friday. *Carmela Reyes-Estrope, Inquirer Central Luzon*

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OPINION

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Five minutes more

EDITORIAL

A HERO," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson, "is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is braver five minutes longer." Surely those crucial five minutes are also the distinguishing mark in the recent lives of so many of the victims and survivors of Tropical Storm "Sendong" in Mindanao who have borne this unprecedented tragedy in their midst, not only with fortitude and faith, but also, in the face of their own personal devastation, the urge to stretch out and still be of help to others in greater need. Men like the caretakers of the Cagayan de Oro City police force, who, while grieving over the loss of two of their comrades and with their own homes and families also affected by the calamity, have continued to search for victims, rescue survivors and conduct relief and retrieval operations in the affected areas. A colleague of theirs had earlier drowned while crossing a swollen river in pursuit of members of a holdup-robbery gang. Another one got caught in raging floodwaters while on a rescue operation at the height of the typhoon. Still, the policemen have not let up, even on Christmas Day—during to go where the search and devastation have necessitated orders.

Philippine National Police Director General Nicanor Bartolome said their operations will continue until a semblance of normality has returned to Northern Mindanao. "This should not dampen the spirit of our policemen," Bartolome said. "This is a reality in the police service where our lives are always at risk particularly in situations like this." But hats off to them.

Among civilians and ordinary folk, the list of those who have extended their own extra five minutes of unrequited heroism grows by the day. A heartbreaking example involves sisters Naomi Peñaflida and Sarah Beregildo. When the floodwaters engulfed their house in the dead of night, they turned up a wooden bed, hoisted their elderly mother Hermida on it, and prepped it up at both ends, even as the water was rising around them by the minute. Six hours later, Hermida managed to climb down with the help of passing neighbors, and found her two daughters dead. They had drowned while holding on to the bed to keep it upright for their mother.

Public school teachers, themselves mourning the loss of loved ones and homes, still found the strength to volunteer to prepare meals in the evacuation centers for the thousands rendered homeless by the floods. "Without any prompting from us, the teachers were the ones cooking food for evacuees," reported Iligan-area Secretary Armida Lastrilla, after he visited Cagayan de Oro and Iligan in the wake of the disaster. "They scrounged around and drew from their own pockets to help feed the evacuees even before help came from outside."

Their selfless, caring impulse also characterizes widow Lizzy Bacle's actions during the deluge, when she opened her two-story, four-bedroom concrete house to serve as shelter to more than 60 people from the neighborhood, mostly children, and to some pets and animals. When the house threatened to give way to the rampaging waters, Bacle ordered everyone to evacuate to a nearby smaller house owned by a sister working in Bahrain. Through a window in Bacle's own bedroom, the evacuees transferred by rope to the other house via a hole in its ceiling. Bacle and her two children were the last to move out. She also ordered that the roof over half of her niece's house be destroyed, because "I was thinking that in the event the house is carried by the waters, we can still escape through the opening." Mercifully, the second structure held, but Bacle's own house, within minutes of the evacuation, was swept out to sea. Some 1,10 houses in the area were also swiped out. Nine of those who took shelter with Bacle lost their lives, though. Her heroism-ere, quick thinking and nonselfishness to save material possessions in the face of universal distress saved the day for everyone.

Thousands of organizations and individuals in the country and abroad are now doing their share to help alleviate the suffering in Mindanao. Without knocking down such humanitarian generosity, let us be clear that the true paragons in this tragedy are the ordinary, often nameless men and women who have given not from their excess or what they could spare, but out of, and despite, their own ruins. Of this steeled band that represents the best and most heroic in our humanity, those on the ground in Mindanao—those who battle their own hopelessness to continue to help others—define for the rest of us what it means to be brave for a precious five minutes more.

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Give other jobs to illegal loggers

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

AS THE heaviest editorialist pointed out some days ago, the floods and landslides were the result of massive deforestation. It was the Filipinos big guns, not the Spanish and American colonizers, who did this. Filipino logging families, mostly with political connections, clear-cut our forests in fact as they could, and grew filthy rich overnight. These are the families who raped our forests and killed all those thousands of victims of floods and landslides.

Focus to ban logging went on for decades but the government answered with "selective log ging" and the giving of logging concessions continued. Now President Aquino has imposed a total log ban but the cutting of forest lines continues. There are no more "legal loggers" but the cutting is being done by "illegal loggers," sometimes called "cardinal loggers." These are the small operators who go into other remains of our forests and cut trees largely unseen by witnesses, least of all by our forest guards.

It is very easy to do this. The loggers are hidden by trees and shrubbery. They saw the logs into lumber and haul them to the lowlands through the use of carabaos, hence the term "carabao loggers."

But apparently, just seen the carabaos are enough in haul all the red logs in the lowlands. So the loggers roll the red logs down the mountainsides in a river below and float them to where they can be hauled to dry land and sold.

Some loggers just leave the logs where they were cut and wait for heavy rains to wash them down the mountainsides to the rivers. These were the logs that crashed into the homes in Cagayan de Oro and Iligan and destroyed them during the massive flood before Christmas and killed thousands of people. The evidence can be seen at the scene of the crime: on logs now found all over the mainland drained by the floods.

Illegal loggers are very difficult to stop. You can cancel the concessions of the big loggers but the illegal loggers don't need any logging concession. A total log ban is totally inviting them to thrive. They justify their illegal activities by saying they have to feed their families.

But many of the illegal loggers are poor farmers without any farms to till. After cutting the trees, they hope to plant food crops in the denuded areas.

And as I pointed out in a previous column, after the illegal loggers come the illegal charcoal makers. There are also poor farmers and jobless workers who turn the branches of the cut logs into charcoal. Worse, they cut even small trees and turn them into charcoal, which they dump as well as merchants to feed the big demand of the thousands of "Sosa Zizon" restaurants and sidewalk barbecue stands in the towns and cities.

They cut even the saplings planted in reforestation areas. One example is the reforestation projects in the mountains of Tanay, Rizal. The Manila Bowling Bank Foundation reforested this bald area with Benguet pines and now the area has more pine trees than Baguio. But go inside and you will find the stubs of cut new saplings and the blackened pits that were used to roast the saplings into charcoal.

Also go to the foothills of these mountains and you will find merchants buying sacklets of charcoal. Drive by some of the villages and you will see big bags of charcoal piled on the side of the road for sale. At the picnic area below Wawa Dam in Montalban, charcoal vendors flout sacks of charcoal to hapless cars down the Wawa River to be sold in the lowlands. Like the illegal loggers, the poorbusiness of the charcoal makers is that they have to feed their families and that is the only means of livelihood available to them.

The point then is to give these people jobs so that they don't have to cut what little is left of our forests. If there is to be a massive reforestation project as the heaviest editorial said, give them jobs planting the seedlings. That way they will have a stake in the reforested areas.

The Aquino administration seems to have forgotten job generation. We have become dependent on foreign jobs for Filipinos who have to come home in droves when normal unjobs for Filipinos who have to come home in droves when normal unjobs for Filipinos who have to come home in droves when normal unj

The saddest and most meaningful Christmas

KUALA MENSING, INCHINA and stories of the flood victims in Northern Mindanao became even more so amid the lights and laughter, good food and family gatherings of the Christmas season. In my case, they also bring back recollections of 30 years ago.

I was having lunch in a feature restaurant with an ITV reporter when he was to cover the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Philippines and wanted some background. She was a tough, little lady who had reported on wars and natural calamities in Africa and the Middle East (she was even given to write at least two books on the violence and non-violence of Islam). Over lunch she told me that the previous Christmas had been the "saddest and most meaningful" of her life.

Before Christmas that year, there had been a severe earthquake in the mountains of southern Italy. The peasants there had built their homes out of stones from their fields, and with the shock of the earthquake the homes collapsed almost 1,000 people died in the avalanche of stones. There were scenes of heart-wrenching as those which we see from Cagayan de Oro and Iligan these days. It was raining and snowing; roads had been destroyed so help was slow in coming. People were sleeping in the open, the living among the dead.

By Christmas Eve, my friend and her camera crew had gotten there. Making their way up a treeless street, they saw something unusual coming toward them, a group of people in a sort of procession. The cameraman shouted, "Carol! Jesus, my eyes are filled with tears." Coming along the road was a young woman dressed as Mary with child, and a man dressed as St. Joseph beside her, leading a donkey. They were looking for a place for the night—the Italian version of our Simbang Gabi. Homeless men and women, some of whom

COMMENTARY

John J. Carroll, S.J.
John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues

had lost everything, walking with the homeless Christ!

It suddenly hit my friend that these simple Italian peasants were telling her something very profound. The loss of God had not become man in order to make many see troubles and sad beings with the wave of a wand, like a magic one. He had come to share them in the full and, by remaining faithful to the Father's will, to triumph over them and lead us to the Father's home.

This insight has remained with me for 31 years, though I cannot claim to have always lived faithfully to it in an outdoor or holistic way. The central "Sweet Risks of Bethlehem" view of Christmas and indeed of Christianity. For the Gospel accounts, while rejecting the angels singing glory to God above and announcing good news to the shepherds, do not soften the poverty, cold and dangerous of the stable below.

Indeed, the shepherds themselves, while perhaps representing Christ's ancestors, the sheep herd-and-hiding Israelites of the Old Testament, in the first century shepherds were outcasts among the Jewish people, living in the fields where smart way science and so they were unable to practice the ritual obligations of the Mosaic law. They were non-persons to observant Jews. Instead of the little shepherd boy and sheep in baby's crib, there should be grimy, foul-smelling men with the "hungry holidays, stinking shepherds," according to a modern Scripture scholar, "who to their ritual uncleanness add no encouragement for all who lack religious status." It was such as these, the "publicans and sinners" who were to be the primary recipients of the Lord's message.

Even the account of the Wise Men coming to worship the newborn King contains a note of foreboding. They first travel down to Jerusalem, rather he plots the death of Jesus, and the dark shadow of another King Herod—who will have him mocked before His execution—falls on the scene to the manger.

Looking ahead, we can see the aged Simeon holding the babe in his arms and saying to His mother, "You one whom Christ has to destroy for the fall and rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected—and a sword will pierce your own soul too—so the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare."

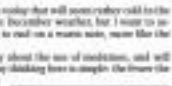
To me these reflections throw a more realistic light on Christmas and particularly on that Christmas Eve in Italy and on Santa Clara figures in the mall. They can help protect Christmas from being hijacked by the sentimentalists and do-gooders. Christmas belongs first of all to the poor, the homeless, the suffering, the outcasts. True, the angels sang joyfully above and we must share the deep down joy of their message, which about thirteen some light on the mystery of evil and suffering in the world. For more than a thousand of our sisters and brothers are dead in the wake of Tropical Storm "Sendong" on Christmas Day and scores of thousands are still homeless.

They are walking with the homeless Christ, seeking a room for the night. Can a true follower of Christ be anything but one of them, extend a helping hand to them? And in so doing, deepen the meaning of Christmas for ourselves?

Salves and balms

I AM doing an article today that will more rather cold to the beginning, much like December weather, but I want to assure you I am going to end on a warm note, more like the season's spirit.

I am writing today about the use of medicines, and will start by saying that my thinking here is simpler the fewer the better, and more would be best.



PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Then philosophy comes from some 28 years of working with medicines, in consumer and health NGOs, and with the Department of Health. I have seen how corruption in the DOH during the Marcos era created a situation where we ended up with thousands of medicines, many of questionable safety and efficacy. We were too slow to remove such medicines, and too quick to allow new ones in.

Dangerous drugs

The situation has improved over the years, especially during the term of Health Secretary Alberto Romualdez with the vigilant Dr. Alberto Bumaldino, later to become health secretary himself, looking after the medicines. Many dangerous drugs were removed, often accompanied by the filing of lawsuits against drug companies.

Later, sitting with the National Drug Committee, which reviewed the medicines to include in a National Drug Formulary, I had to update myself on conditions not even approved in the Philippines and to learn from seasoned pharmacologists like Dr. Hector Santos and Dr. Esther Pacis with the UP.

Unfortunately, the drug market remains a difficult one to navigate, with too many products and an overworked Food and Drugs Administration. Yet I know there to be even more vigilant with the medicines because I am raising very young children and caring for very elderly parents, the very young and the very old being particularly vulnerable when it comes to adverse effects of medicines.

The problems are compounded today by the proliferation of medicines claiming to be "herbal" or "natural." I put those words in quotation marks because many of those preparations, for example, glutathione, are not herbal at all and "natural" is not an assurance of safety either.

There is a demand for these supplements, spurred by advertisements and by the consumers' fears of the side effects of "Western" medicines, but many of the problems with "synthetic" medicines are found as well today in our so-called "natural" medicines.

Most of these preparations are not approved as medicines by government and are instead registered as "food supplements," which means they don't have to go through the more stringent tests for efficacy. That is the reason but that those drugs have so many on their labels. "No Therapeutic Claims Approved," let the supplements are advertised with all kinds of therapeutic claims, sometimes even with a disclaimer that split second "No Therapeutic Claims Approved" after naming all the diseases. As exasperated Dr. Esperanza Cabral, during her term as health secretary, tuned an order that would have required an even stricter "Drink in garnet" label but she was blasted by scientists.

Those supplements that are cheap rather faster are even more expensive than "synthetic" ones, and it is the poor, desperate for solutions to their health problems, who end up paying more, as a percentage of their tiny household budgets, for these worthless.

Despite fears for medicines—"natural" or "artificial," "Pharma" is not the enemy. Medicines that want health, and they want relief from pains and illnesses. Yet, underlying the effectiveness of many of these chemicals is what we medical anthropologists call "a usual drug effect," the medicine's action being due not just to its active ingredients but also because of the drug preparation's name, packaging, labeling, even color and taste. The usual drug effect includes a placebo component, meaning that even if you gave a substance with our sole active ingredient, it would still have a beneficial effect for the patient. And over the years, I have come to appreciate the importance of another component to this total drug effect. the providers of the medicine.

Thyroid

The prescribing physician is of all important here, presumptions taking almost magical qualities because they symbolize a doctor's knowledge and power. So too is the dispenser, the pharmacist or clerk in the drugstore. But the provider can also be the person giving the medicine. This was exposed by that classic ad for Mula Sigmoid showing a mother noticing on the medicine's label that it was manufactured by Mula Pharmaceuticals

Nature exacts revenge

If Wikileaks is happier. The elements were clearly logging, whether legal or illegal, but certainly historical, the quality of local government officials (remember the Mindanao deployment when assembled officials and employees from Metro Manila to clear the rivers and waterways clogged by debris and water hyacinths?), finger-pointing politicians, unconnected (anonymous) individuals dwellers forced by poverty on dry stump streets and backsides.

In all the known report, some 1,200 persons perished in the landslides of mud and water that hit the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan. This calamity brings to mind the devastation that happened in Ormoc City, Isabela Bernard, Southern Leyte, and other parts of the country.

Some quarters, especially from the hosts of loggers and lumber merchants, would say that such occurrences are caused by nature. But they would not touch illegal proportions were it not for the devastation of forests. Needless to say forest destruction spawns soil erosion, landslides and flash floods.

Indeed, good kills people. In the latest calamity, the number of casualties, including children and the elderly, was so mind-blowing that people with conscience would only gasp their teeth in anger and frustration. Certainly Tropical Storm "Sendong" was not the only rain to blame but more so the unscrupulous businessmen who make fast money at the expense of the people. I wonder how the constitutional mandate distributed forests and woods or its lands of natural and deep-seated to look at destruction in the mid-to without illusion and ignorance.

Smoking area at the mosque: Don't drink and disorderly manner. It causes damage.

But it is sad to note that the victims are the innocent and not the culprits.

We find solace in the thought that amid the tragedy, the death-defying spirit of humanism of the Filipinos has surfaced once again. Here in Southern California, many Filipinos, who are either immigrants of citizens of America, banded together and organized means to raise funds and collect relief for the typhoon victims. And it is very inspiring to learn that public schools are here in the Philippines, despite their meager salaries, raised money for the schoolchildren whose parents perished in the storm. They even cancelled their Christmas get-together so that the money they collected for the purpose would be given to the victims of the tragedy.

This show of concern and kindness provides a shady contrast to the greed of unscrupulous businessmen. Or Kalyo ay tinga garo?

—EUSEBIO S. SAN DIEGO,
founder, Kagayo-and Bayanihan Foundation, Quezon City Public School Teachers Association
ssandiego@ymail.com

Chief Justice is only reaping what he sowed

THE ACT of President Aquino in calling a spade a spade is laudable. Telling a person that his accusations are unacceptable is right. This is the law of "karma." You reap what you sow.

Being nice can never be a laudable virtue when it plays blind to irregularities that are being committed. The actions of the present Supreme Court under Chief Justice Renato Corona has set aside all legal canons. In return, the Chief Justice deserves the same treatment. He unceremonial salute demeanor is a revelation of guilt.

—ALEJANDRO L. BONIFACIO, 3 Verdandi Bldg., Pioneer Avenue, Roosevelt Subdivision City

LETTERS

DBP gained from Ongpin loans, lost in Lopez write-offs

THE DEC. 23, 2011 Inquirer issue carried a letter from a certain Abelardo C. Dagupin, dated "Lopez group's loans an investment to shows less than Ongpin."

I am the counsel for Roberto Ongpin and I would like to react to Dagupin's patently false allegations:

1. There is no "loan" whatsoever on Ongpin and therefore, there is nothing to dismiss. Dagupin's loans from the Development Bank of the Philippines, as has been shown time and time again, were completely regular, fully secured and fully paid. There is no doubt and in denying that DBP made substantial amounts of money as a result of making those loans.

2. There is also no denying that DBP had to write off substantial amounts of loans made to the Lopez group. The information from DBP is that the total write-offs were P3.7 billion. We believe that Cruz had every right to raise the issue of why certain members of the Senate are pushing only for the investigation of Ongpin's loans (where DBP made a lot of money), and not the Lopez Group loans (where DBP lost a lot of money).

3. We repeat our previous assertion that neither Ongpin nor his lawyers, nor any of his associates, had anything to do with the publication of the articles of Inland Cross.

—RODOLFO M. A. PENETRANTE,
counsel for Roberto Ongpin

Focusing on form rather than on substance

RAM DEL refer to Mike Morales' report on the alleged plan of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority to call on traffic enforcers to "intimidate."

The MMDA made their gave the reason for wanting to use "intimidate"—"not simply to give some friendly shove to the bike and motorcycle riders who violate traffic regulations." But were not personnel to the media shove them and to get more respect."

Many former and incumbent officers who served in the Philippine Constabulary and the Philippine National Police were surprised, some were appalled and all of them acutely objected to the plan.

Military leaders, with police, included, simply know that in both functional and modern usage "intimidate" is universally associated with police and law enforcement officers in the Philippines serving, it is exactly the same and should be given appropriate respect in the title of a professionally trained public servant subject to the rule of law and public accountability.

It brings back to the days of martial law, from the time it was established by the orders of the Philippine Constabulary in August 1901 until the National Defense Act of 1935 was passed, during the time Douglas MACARTHUR, the Philippine Constabulary was a police organization, with its "intimidate" "subdue" to enforce the law and maintain peace and order."

The responsibility to protect citizens is an integral ingredient of the PCG functions—under President Manuel L. Quezon's Executive Order 11 (Jan. 1, 1936) which made the PC a division of the Philippine Army; under President Sergio Osmeña's Order No. 23 (Oct. 28, 1944) which placed the PC on active service of the Philippine Commonwealth Army; under President Elpidio Quirino's EO No. 389 (Dec. 31, 1950) which made the PC a major division of the Philippine Army; and in Jan. 29, 1991, when the new Philippine National Police was formed by merging the integrated National Police with the Philippine Constabulary.

Indeed as former DILG chief Edgar Aglipay and incumbent PNP chief Director General Nicanor Bartolome correctly pointed out in their separate letters, the use of "intimidate" (which connotes authority to "subdue the use and excessive force and order") by traffic enforcers would be misleading and engender confusion on the matter and source of their authority. Any penalty over abusive misuse of such authority is still due to a completely unwarranted and unnecessary deviation from some honored traditions.

—ANTONIO LAGUESMA,
spokesman of former President Fidel V. Ramos

Start war vs corruption by following traffic rules

WE often criticize politicians for being corrupt and we imagine them as scheming and evil-looking persons. Corruption is visible, but is unnoticed by others caused by a lack of the human virtues of humility and shame. Thus, small-scale corruption is not seen as such. Let us start war vs corruption by following traffic rules.

Motorists are not caught red-handed obstructing millions of doors yet, perhaps, members of what they are doing because of their lack of discipline and their hurry. Instead than sensitively and correctly due others in very small things.

—JOSÉ MARIA S. DE LEON, Ms.
22 Sierra Magdalena St., Tierra Nova, Quezon City

Justices should be picked via democratic process

IN HIS IMPEACHMENT trial, Chief Justice Renato Corona's impeachment by the House of Representatives is a welcome accomplishment, the Philippine Lakas ng Mga Pilipino (PLM) supports the appointment of members of the Supreme Court should change and that the government review the process of selecting Supreme Court justices and come up with a democratic method.

We believe that the time that got the President's attention to appoint Corona to the Supreme Court was a deliberate move to distribute the 4,818 hectares of Hacienda Luisita owned by the Aquino-Cojuangco clan to the full farm worker beneficiaries. But while the decision is commendable, we believe it was long overdue and has been used merely as a political ploy against the President. This decision, whose implementation will likely be delayed by lies, does disservice, causes, on the basis of "pre-cognitions" and pre-conceived decisions made by the Court. These include the decision to grant the motion for reconsideration filed by Hacienda Luisita Inc. and the reopening and reversal of a Court ruling favorable to Rights Foundation and overturn (Pasay case) based on a mere letter sent by Lucio Tan's lawyer.

This Supreme Court has been in power for more than 25 years that does not serve the interest of the workers and the poor people, a court that only serves the rich and powerful, the ruling elite, be it the Aquinos, the Lucio Tans and Teodoro Cojuangcos of the land.

We believe that it is time on, by Chief Justice Renato Corona, to who should be impeached. To spare the people from the machinations of the Arroyo-controlled Supreme Court and a court beholden to the ruling class' interests, we call for the resignation of all the Supreme Court justices.

The government should be given a clear hand to choose new justices who have proven track records of integrity, competence, probity and independence; persons who have clear track records of serving the interest of the people, not factions of the elite.

But we also believe that one of the main reasons we have a Supreme Court is that the power to appoint Supreme Court justices is in the hands of the president.

While it is true that members of the Supreme Court are chosen from a list prepared by the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC), the JBC itself is mostly composed of appointees of the President. The list submitted by the Commission on Appointments, that it is, in fact, controlled by whatever party is in power.

To ensure that the Court will be independent from the executive and legislative branches of government, the President should adopt a transparent approach to choosing the new justices. This can be done by a process that involves public consultations, consultations and hearings. Independent people's organizations, including the incorporated Bar of the Philippines, human rights groups, civil society groups and others should be asked to nominate possible members of the Supreme Court, based on some minimal requirements.

—JOVERT BESTRIDO,
chair, Partido Lakas ng Mga Pilipino
partidolakas-mgapilipino@yahoo.com

House arrest out of respect for a former president?

WE WOULD like to commend President Aquino for having the restraint and remaining the courage to resist the fight to stop corruption in the Philippines. Ebola Masagpak Ampon) actions and accusations from the time the decided to unleash on government have been suspect from the beginning.

The recent political development are encouraging because we can observe government action to safeguard the rule of law in the country. Having government officials with strong political will and with the help of investigative journalism and the media, we can rid our country of "the criminal" in politics and business.

As this stage, we hope that the government will continue its investigations in seeking justice for the Filipino ancestors, to the regions, should Arroyo be detained in the confines of her luxury home simply because she was once the president of the Philippines? And by what measure of "respect" does the country owe her a house arrest? It will bring pain to many Filipinos if former even given special treatment as a former president, a rule and position that did not even belong to her in the first place.

Following the course of law and logic, she does not deserve a house arrest.

—EZEKIEL CASTRO,
castroezekiel@yahoo.com.ph

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CAMPAIGN LOGO DESIGN CONTEST
Open to all Individuals and Groups. No age limit required.
Deadline of submission of entries:
December 31, 2011 12:00 midnight.
PhilHealth
For the contest mechanics and entry forms, visit: www.philhealth.gov.ph
For inquiries call 637-6282

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Across the NATION

More heads to roll on ARMM logging

POLICEMEN join a visit by fourth officials to a fireworks factory in Bocaue, Bulacan, known as the country's firecracker capital. (DAN MACEDA)

CUDARATO CITY—The highest ranking officer in charge of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) yesterday said he expects more heads to roll as efforts continue to identify and punish officials responsible for unabated forest destruction in one of the country's most impoverished but resource-rich regions.

Khalid Hamarsan, acting governor of ARMM, had fired the head of the environment and natural resources office of Lanao del Sur before he ordered the illegal logging premises in that province despite a ban that Hamarsan reimposed on the day of his assumption into office and upon the directive of President Aquino.

He said more officials would be sacked.

According to Hamarsan, Abdih Pangandaman, who was sacked as Lanao del Sur chief environment and natural resources official, could not deny continued logging in the province because it has become common knowledge that two cutting permits were issued Lalan Lanao, a major watershed area.

Logging has been partly blamed for the deadliest disaster that struck the country in recent years and killed hundreds of people in the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan. The death toll is expected to reach 2,000.

Manolo Bocoling washed ashore in Iligan bandfuls of logs that now dot the city's beaches. Residents of the disaster-stricken ravenaged have logs flooding in the floodwater even-tually washed owners of people.

Hamarsan said aside from dismissing erring officials, his administration would also press charges against them.

"We have to file appropriate charges because, otherwise, I would be liable under the (ARMM) Administrative Code if I tolerated this thing," Hamarsan told the reporters.

LOGS carried by floods rammed into this house in Iligan City causing destruction some heavy seen by city residents. (DENNIS JAMES DEL ROSARIO)

Logging, he said, had reportedly been banned in the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan and Sulu, but the cutting of trees continued.

Dalipong ARMM Environment Secretary Usman Sumagpad said cautious logging did exist in Lanao del Sur. He said he did not know of any large-scale logging operations in the province.

But Hamarsan said his initial information was that three big logging companies were operating in Lanao del Sur.

He said he hoped to gather more facts on the three big companies and unabated illegal logging in Lanao del Sur from the Army-led Task Force Hamas (TFH), which was initially formed to combat all forms of crime, particularly kidnapping, in the two Lanao provinces.

Hamarsan said information from local government officials would also be crucial in the fight to stop logging completely in the devastated areas.

"The meeting with TFH can hopefully determine which very tax would effectively act on the problem caused by persistent logging operations in the area with regards to the marching order of the President for a total log ban in the region," he said.

Ruth E. Mendoza and Roberto O. Armendez, Inquirer Mindanao

Firecracker blast kills boy, 6, in Bulacan town

CAMP VIRA, MALOLOS, Bulacan—A 6-year-old boy was killed on Monday when a triggered firecracker exploded in Barangay Poblacion.

It was the second case involving firecracker use in this province in capital a week before the New Year celebration. On Sunday night, a man lost his leg in a powerful firecracker explosion in Bocaue town.

But despite the two cases, sales of firecrackers and other pyrotechnic products have been brisk since Sunday, according to business manufacturers.

Mark de Silva, a tricycle driver, had bought packs of assorted firecrackers from Bocaue and was going to Barangay Mala in Colombo, Bocaue town, when the firecrackers exploded in Barangay Poblacion in Norzagaray at 8 p.m. on Monday.

His son, John Emmanuel, who was perched behind him, was directly hit and died while undergoing treatment at Norzagaray Municipal Hospital.

De Silva suffered major burns and was transferred to the Philippine General Hospital in Manila.

Police said the load of firecrackers was ignited by sparks from the exhaust pipe of the tricycle.

In Bocaue, Jacobi Manzanero, 18, of Barangay Bunsuy Second, and his friends ignited a powerful firecracker, called locally as "Chaokbye Philippines," during a drinking binge inside a vacant lot at 8 p.m. on Sunday. Manzanero had to bid goodbye to his right leg as the firecracker was strong enough to blast it off.

Goodbye Philippines is a four-inch firecracker that is shaped like a triangle. It is loaded with five times the amount of the chemical component of a regulated firecracker.

Police have been pursuing traffickers of illicit fireworks. They recently arrested Roy Angel Sebastian, 37, of Bocaue, for possessing illegal explosives. Sebastian's relatives called "Pipoy" and another each filled with unregulated "Super Lolo" firecrackers. Leonardo Reyes-Aquino, Inquirer Central Luzon

'MOTHER OF TAX EVASION CASES'

Cebu whistle-blower sues tycoon on taxes

By Connie E. Fernandez
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—A Cebuano whistle-blower has charged two firms owned by tycoon Lucio Tan of allegedly using dummy companies to evade paying taxes worth billions of pesos.

Danilo Pacaña, 56, filed tax evasion charges against Fortune Tobacco Corp., Philip Morris Fortune Tobacco Corp. (FTC-PMFTC) and Asia Brewery Inc. (ABI) at the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) on Dec. 6.

He asked BIR Commissioner Kim Henares to conduct an "honest to goodness investigation" of these firms to collect the correct amounts of taxes from them.

Pacaña said he believed that the case was the "mother of tax evasion cases in the country's history." The tax evasion had allegedly gone on for at least 20 years, he said, and had cost the government billions of pesos.

No comment

The Inquirer contacted officials of Tan's companies but they declined to comment.

Julius Imbarugia, BIR chief of staff on legal matters, confirmed Pacaña's complaint had been received by Henares on Dec. 6.

He said the complaint would be merged with other cases involving Tan's companies that were being tackled by the BIR.

"Unlike him, we cannot go public and talk about these cases being evaluated because these are confidential," he told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

Pacaña was a former regional auditor of the Tan-owned Allied Banking Corp. when he blew the whistle on the bank's alleged purchase of tax-paying documentary stamps or certificates of time deposits from 1979 to 1997. He resigned from the bank in 1998.

P11.3M in taxes

Pacaña said the bank's tax deficiency was assessed P213 million, but Allied Bank didn't pay a single centavo after that. BIR chief Jacinto Paras finally dismissed the case in September 1998.

He said he volunteered to testify on FTC's alleged practice of using dummy firms but he later backed out when he noticed that the BIR would also dismiss entire tax cases against the firm. But 13 years after, he said the practice apparently continued.

In his affidavit, Pacaña claimed that FTC-PMFTC created at least seven dummy manufacturing firms to render declare taxable transactions to pay minimal excise taxes from 1986.

He said his information came from the firm's former senior salesman assigned to the Visayas office who retired recently after 30 years in the company.

'Paper trail'

The salesman, whose name was withheld, allegedly issued receipts and sales invoices and deposited the sales to the accounts of the alleged dummy firms in Allied Bank. Pacaña said the funds eventually ended up in the bank's branch in Manila.

Pacaña said ABI also used dummy firms as marketing arms to evade payment of excise taxes.

He said he was provided a confidential memo issued by an ABI official to managers of the alleged dummy companies on Feb. 29, 1996, instructing them to "conceal and remove any information that provide papers' trail" on the firms' ownership.

The memo was given to him by Elpidio Quas, former ABI regional sales manager in Leyte who was terminated in 2007 after working in the firm for 30 years.

AFP ships, choppers, trucks bring flood aid

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Unarmed men in Navy ships, Air Force helicopters and Army trucks brought relief goods for victims of Tropical Storm "Sendong" here, playing Santa Claus to people brought to their knees by the country's deadliest disaster in recent years.

The first to arrive was BRP Dagupan, of the Philippine Navy, at the port of Macabalan bringing 500 coffins and tons of relief goods and thousands of bottles of water.

Lt. Gen. Victor Felix, head of the country's 9th Infantry Division, said victims who refuse to go to evacuation centers were priority in water distribution.

As BRP Dagupan docked, a 25-truck convoy from the Eastern Mindanao Command in Davao City arrived with relief goods, too.

Maj. Jacob Dilipanis, civil-military operations chief of the 10th Infantry Division, said the goods were collected from donors in Southern Mindanao.

"Everyone gave their share. This is the true spirit of bayanihan," said Dilipanis.

In Iligan City, two government helicopters delivered relief goods to isolated village highlands.

Brig. Gen. Roland Amarelli, deputy commander of the Philippine Army's 1st Infantry Tabak Division, said delivery of relief goods to upland communities would continue.

Two trucks of the Philippine Army were also in Iligan City to bring relief goods.

At the Gay Hall here, however, only a handful of families were present during the distribution of relief goods.

Lito Wapile, social welfare project officer, said each family was expected to receive a package of bread, sardines, spread and juice. "Hopefully, there will be some slices of ham," he said.

Some of the victims, however, said they were just happy they were alive. "Our neighbors were not so lucky," said evacuee Angelito Sarita.

Some others were overcome with sadness. "It's as if there's nothing to celebrate," said Selina Rosero, 79. Bobbi Legaz, with a report from Rachel E. Ortal, Inquirer Mindanao

THE SIGHT of bodies of victims of Tropical Storm "Sendong" could make one sense of the country's most powerful tropical storm. Vice President Binay views bodies piled up in a Cagayan de Oro mortuary. (RICHARD ARGUELLES)

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Baguio Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

In Bataan, eco-advocates push protection of Mt. Natib

By Robert Gerzaga
Orani, Bataan

ENVIRONMENT advocates are pushing for the protection of Mt. Natib, a dormant volcano in the Bataan National Park, against illegal loggers and harmful tourist activities.

Iraya-town organized by nongovernment and government organizations, companies and residents of Bataan and Zambales on Dec. 17, the indigenous tribes of these provinces found themselves at the forefront of forest conservation activities.

Inong de la Cruz, 64, an Aeta leader from Pinukpuk village in Hermosa town, said the whole day of fun run, tribal games and tree planting, called "Barkadahan para sa Kalikasan," was a means "for letting the next generation, whether Aeta or not, know that they would have to be responsible for the protection of nature."

He said members of the Aeta tribe participated in the games, which included archery, spear throwing and a 10-kilometer run that was joined in by Central Luzon residents.

De la Cruz said the main danger facing areas like Mt. Natib, which is rich in flora and fauna, is not caring for the environment.

"Trees are being cut down for an alarming rate. And now there are wide spaces where there used to be trees, which are now gone. We've brought our Aeta youth here to tell them that Mt. Natib is in danger, and we should do what we can to preserve it," he said.

PARTICIPANTS in "Barkadahan Para sa Kalikasan" led by DCDA Chair Felicito Payumo, take a break from a whole day of fun run, tribal games and tree planting on Dec. 17.

DENUDED section of the Bataan National Park in Orion town.

Last eruption

A 2009 paper by Dr. Edvin Rodolfo, professor emeritus of the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and geologists had documented prehistoric pyroclastic flow from Mt. Natib that entered Subic Bay between 11,000 and 16,800 years ago.

This can be assumed to have occurred during Mt. Natib's latest eruption, Rodolfo said.

Brig. Gen. Edwin Manuel Hemedez, a Philippine Air Force commander in Pampanga, said the military joined the activity as a way of "lifting the awareness aside (from)." "We aspire to spread tree planting, not only here in Bataan, but in the whole region," he said.

"If trees will be cut, then there should be tree planting. If you see small trees, then they should (be protected). Fruit-bearing trees are not just a food source, but these will also stop soil erosion," he added.

Amado Villanueva, head of the provincial environment and natural resources office (Penro), said it was better if the youth knew what the conservation advocacy was about.

"Still young but are already traditional. We have so much from global warming caused by deforestation. There are many things that need to be done. Even now, we can fight global warming through activities like this. But we should not stop at tree planting, but we should also protect those trees that are still standing in our forests," he said.

He said one problem of the Penro in protecting Mt. Natib is the lack of resources. "We only have a few forest guards, covering an area that is so big. But we coordinate with local governments and even the military to preserve what's still there," he said.

"We're the only ones who will be (adversely) affected if we do not take care of our environment. There have been so many occasions where (many lives) were lost (because) that could have been prevented through reforestation," he said.

Not just for fun

Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) Chair Felicito Payumo, a native of Bataan and a main proponent of the conservation of Mt. Natib, said the activity was not just for fun.

"We have a real purpose here, not just for us, but for future generations," he said.

Payumo gave a presentation about the threat to Mt. Natib posed by illegal logging, which has resulted in damage to at least 3 hectares of forest land.

"When we ascended Mt. Natib, we found out that there are still many illegal loggers who are still operating in the area. We have already informed the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the military about this, and we are hoping that they will be able to help us in stopping this illegal activity," he said.

"We're also encouraging the Aeta tribe to help us in protecting the forest. We're giving them livelihood projects, like bee-keeping, so that they will not be tempted to cut trees," he added.

Payumo said he was also pushing for the creation of a Mt. Natib Protected Landscape, which would be managed by the Penro.

"We're also pushing for the creation of a Mt. Natib Protected Landscape, which would be managed by the Penro.

Worst is yet to come, says Pagasa

From page A1

Pemalemial spokesperson Edsiri Laurenta, reacting to an inquiry from that Cabinet official, said he failed to heed warnings of an environmental catastrophe, and that the solution session in the early days was "doing a lot of shouting of the land mines," referring to allegations of corruption against the previous Arroyo administration.

"The situation right now has made it unsuitable for us as well as for the local government units to seriously look into the hazard areas," Laurenta said.

During the 2020-2050 period, there would be less rainfall during summer, "making the months dry season either," the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said in its 2011 report, "Climate Change in the Philippines."

Rainfall, however, is likely to increase during the rainy season from June to August, and then from September to November, "making these seasons wetter," according to the report released this month.

'Water stress'

Hence, these areas would be hit by droughts and floods, Pagasa said.

Regions or provinces, where rainfall drop is projected, would experience "water stress" which would affect ecosystems, agriculture, livelihood, health and human settlement.

"Large decreases in rainfall and longer drier periods will affect the amount of water in reservoirs and dams which provide irrigation services to farmers, especially those in rain-fed areas, thereby limiting agricultural production," Pagasa said.

The projected rainfall would also impact on energy power produced by dams, and as a result, affect the country's energy sufficiency program. That's why there's a need to revisit the design of dams to allow them to adapt to the projected longer drier periods, the weather bureau said.

In areas where rainfall is projected to minimally during wet periods, flooding would increase and pose danger to homes and infrastructure in geologically unstable areas.

Pagasa projected that rainfall would decrease in most parts of the country during summer.

Rainfall, however, would increase in most areas of Luzon and Visayas during the southwest monsoon in the months of June, July and August until September, October and November; and during the northeast monsoon or Amihan in December, January and February, it said.

"Heavy daily rainfall will continue to become more frequent, extreme rainfall is projected to increase in Luzon and Visayas only, but the number of dry days is projected longer drier periods, for

Editor Teddyboy S. Molundro
Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ortuoste

SPORTS

ABL exhibition games pit Beermen, Patriots vs Qatari club

By Jaymin W. Pupa

AMID A looming rivalry, the Alaska Philippine Patriots and the San Miguel Beermen vie to boost their buildup with another tune-up of exhibition matches before the Asean Basketball League (ABL) fires off on Jan. 14.

The Beermen, one of the defending squads in the regional home-and-away league, buckle the Qatari Al-Arjan at 2 p.m. today at the Ynares Sports Arena, before another throwdown on Jan. 5.

The Patriots take their turn against the same Qatari club champion team at 4 p.m. on Friday at the PBSP Flying V Arena in San Juan.

Admission is free.

Fielding a retooled lineup, the Patriots flubbed second to the Beermen in a preseason tournament last week where six of beaten 11 eight-team cast saw action.

New coach Elmer Capacio said his Os- tients are "still far from being called a team" while the Beermen looked "prepared" to the extent To Be Needed One Basketball Challenge in Bangkok.

The Patriots hope to reshape the roster they lost to the Chang Thailand Slammers last season by tapping reigning Pave Import Hakim Miller and bid Tony Johnson as reinforcements.

Former Stuart Dias mainstay Aldrech Ramos and veteran guards Al Vergara and Warren Vendon bonster the Patriots' local cast.

The Beermen also boast a powerhouse lineup led by Chris Ilendrarto, the Filipino- Indian guard who consistently delivered solid games in the Bangkok tourney.

The 22-year-old Ilendrarto, who teams his mate to Ronnie, bagged the All-Asean- can Player of the Year when he starred with the Seattle Pacific University in the NCAA Division II last year.

American imports Dalton Johnson and Richard Jone also made strong only impressions for the Beermen along with Cohen's 6-foot-10 standout Jammar Seguards.

Team fans two more weeks to gear up before the league's opening weekend where the Beermen will battle the Bangkok Cobras while the Beermen will clash with the Westports Malaysia Dragons.

Rounding up the competition are the Indonesia Warriors, Saigon Heat, Singapore Slingers and the defending champion Hong Kong Eagles.

'Mr. Kardashian' helps Nets silence Wizards

OKLAHOMA City's Russell Westbrook (left) tries to barrel his way past a shorter Ⓖ Barry of Minnesota.

WASHINGTON—Kunle Washington Wizards fans were keeping up with the Kardashians.

At least that might explain why they relentlessly booed Kris Humphries, the New Jersey Nets forward famous for his much-hyped—and short-lived—marriage to Kim Kardashian.

Jeered during pregame introductions and but-tapped every time he touched the ball Monday, Humphries ignored all the attention and finished with 21 points and 18 rebounds, helping New Jersey erase a 21-point deficit and come all the way back to beat Washington, 90-84, in the season opener for both teams.

"To me, it's motivation. People are yelling at you—you've got to perform, you've got to play hard. They might want to have a reason to say something. You want to try and give them that reason," said Humphries, who was married to the reality TV star for just 72 days.

Now, coach Avery Johnson was at a loss to explain all the hostility.

"I'm trying to figure out: What did he do? I'm serious. It may be because I don't follow reality TV—I don't know all the ins and outs of it. It's pretty hilarious to me," Johnson said. "I don't even know if they know who they're booing."

Deron Williams had 23 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for New Jersey, which trailed by as many as 21 points in the second quarter, but began to turn things around with a 16-2 run.

Brook Lopez had 19 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists for the Nets, who lost their opening game on Christmas Day.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, the Hornets erased a 14-point deficit to edge the Minnesota Timberwolves, 86-85.

Al Jefferson scored 18 points while rookie Bismack Biyombo added 13, including two free throws with 9.9 seconds remaining.

Brandon Jennings had 22 points for the Bucks.

In Orlando, Hedo Turkoglu scored 23 points to lead the Magic players in double figures as the Magic held off the Houston Rockets, 104-95.

Orlando got 21 points from Turkoglu and eight points from Jo Redick in the fourth quarter to help the Magic stave off a handful of second-half changes by the Rockets.

Kyle Lowry had 20 points and 12 assists for Houston.

Backup shooting guard Nick Young led Washington with 16 points in just 18 minutes. He missed a large part of the second half with a foot injury but returned.

In Oakland, Stephen Curry had 21 points and 10 assists as Golden State exploded Chicago, 99-91, giving new coach Mark Jackson his first victory.

Monta Ellis scored 26 points for the Warriors, who lost their opening game on Christmas Day.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, the Hornets erased a 14-point deficit to edge the Minnesota Timberwolves, 86-85.

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In Indianapolis, Roy Hibbert had 20 points and 14 rebounds as the Pacers topped the Detroit Pistons, 93-79.

David West, Hibbert's big five opposite number, had 11 points and 12 rebounds, even though he made just 5 of 12 field goals.

The Pacers shot just 37 percent from the field, but got away with it because they controlled the Pistons, 53-38. Indiana had 18 offensive rebounds and 14 second-chance points.

In Cleveland, rookie Kyrie Irving scored just six points and handed played like the No. 1 draft pick as the Toronto Raptors spoiled the Cavaliers' guard's NBA debut with a 104-96 victory.

Irving, who played just 21 college games before turning pro, finished just 2 of 13 from the field—he made no 3-pointers—in 36 minutes. The Cavs are rebuilding as the 19-year-old's team scored a team that won just 19 games last season.

In Minneapolis, Kevin Durant scored 31 points as the young Oklahoma Thunder rolled to their second straight victory to open the season with a 30-6 300 stopping of the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Russell Westbrook added 20 points, six assists and six rebounds for the Thunder, who have started off a season loaded with expectations.

Kevin Love had 22 points, 12 rebounds and five assists for the Timberwolves, who have the hyped debut of Spanish guard Ricky Rubio get spoiled.

In Dallas, Ty Lawson scored 20 of his 27 points in the first half for the Denver Nuggets, which found little resistance on its way to a 113-95 crushing of the defending champion Mavericks.

In Phoenix, Eric Gordon made a 29-footer from the top of the key with 4.2 seconds to play in his New Orleans debut to give the Hornets an 83-84 squeaker over the Suns.

Gordon finished with 26 points and Emil Landry added 14 for New Orleans.

In San Antonio, Manu Ginobili scored 24 points as the Spurs put some payback after its opening playoff collapse last season, beating the Memphis Grizzlies, 95-82.

In Portland, LaMarcus Aldridge had 23 points and seven rebounds as the Trail Blazers edged the Philadelphia 76ers, 107-103. AP

NEW Jersey star Deron Williams (left) tussles Washington's guard Jordan Crawford for the loose ball.

Lakers off to worst start in 9 years

SACRAMENTO—The Los Angeles Lakers continued its stumbling ways to a new era with a 100-91 road loss to the Sacramento Kings on Saturday as the visitors matched their poorest opening to a campaign in nine years.

Following their fourth-quarter meltdown against the Chicago Bulls on Christmas Day, the Lakers (0-2) were overpowered by the young Kings, leaving new coach Mike Brown still search- ing for his first victory since taking over in the offseason.

Marcus Thornton scored 12 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter for Sacramento and Tyreke Evans added 20 to unseat ex-gamer high 20 from Lou Amgaler's Robin Hopson.

Dwight Howard, newly lost the Kings in the offseason, when a transfer to Anaheim seemed imminent. But the team decided to stay, at least for now.

"It was nice to be back," coach Mike Brown said. "It was wild to these and our players really liked the feeling of the game. The fans were fantastic."

The Kings looked fresh to odour was their season opener, continually beating the Lakers for pace around the court to build a 14-point advantage through three quarters.

Los Angeles, however, woke from its slumber and fought back to trail 89-87 late in the game, but Sacramento went on 9-0 run in the final five minutes to seal the victory.

Metta World Peace added 19 for the Lakers, who opened the season with consecutive losses for the first time since 2002-03, posing a danger on the start of how coach Mike Brown's tenure.

"We have a lot of games left, a lot of games left," World Peace said. "Everything is going OK. Everything will be great." Reuters, AP

Berbatov powers Manchester United

LONDON—Manchester United flourished as Manchester City floundered on Monday to edge out its neighbor's lead in the Premier League title race.

City's run left clinging to top spot on goal difference after its expensively assembled attacking unit failed to score for the first time this season in a 0-0 draw at West Bromwich Albion.

Injury-hit United took full advantage, with Dimitar Berbatov's hat trick powering the champions to a second 3-0 win in a week against Wigan.

"We're really hitting good from one end there's a real good threat about us from all departments," United manager Alex Ferguson said. "If we're top of the league on June top with City by four that's fine I'll be happy."

The Manchester rivals are 10 points ahead of third-place Tottenham, which plays the first of two games in hand at Norwich on Sunday.

Chelsea is a point further back in fourth and has all but given up on its title hopes after Fulham condemned its west London rival to a third consecutive 1-1 draw.

Liverpool, three points behind Chelsea in sixth, failed to price on Chelsea's slip-up, drawing 1-1 at home to bottom-place Southampton.

Almost halfway through the season, the title race looks more and more like a two-horse race, although City is starting to show signs of weakness after seizing a record for the best start ever to a Premier League campaign.

Mario Balotelli struck the top of the crossbar from 30 yards (meters) at the start of the second half having already had a goal disallowed when he volleyed home only to see an offside flag raised.

"We know it is maybe impossible to stay at the top for 38 games but we will try," City manager Roberto Mancini said. "Maybe if we scored in the first half we would have scored two or three goals." AP

MANCHESTER United's Dimitar Berbatov (right) warns against Wigan Athletic.

PSC-LGU summit slated

By Jaro Navarro

THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission will hold a summit to- working local government units (LGU) in an effort to boost the country's grassroots program.

"We want to entice more athletes to participate by encouraging the city or municipality where they come from to join the Batang Pinoy," said PSC commissioner Jolly Gomez.

The idea behind the summit comes from the poor attendance of LGUs in the grassroots-based Batang Pinoy an Olympic-style event featuring young athletes.

Out of over 5,000 local government units nationwide, only 98 LGUs joined the event, which is the PSC's flagship grassroots program.

The summit is tentatively slated Jan. 26 and 27 with officials from the various departments also expected to attend.

During the Batang Pinoy's five regional qualifying legs and the national finals in Bago City two weeks ago, several young talents shone, Gomez said.

"But it's not enough. They're not there somewhere and we'll be putting hard to find these athletes who could make us proud in major international tournaments," said Gomez.

The PSC hopes to replace aging pool of athletes who led the country in a stalwart fashion in the Southeast Asian Games. The Philippines brought home 36 gold, 56 silver and 77 bronze medals from Indonesia last month, the country's lowest output since joining the biennial meet in 1977.

One-game PBA playdates to benefit fans

IN HUDDLE

Beth Cayla

I MUST admit I had some misgivings on launching the PBA Board had approved a daily, one-game schedule for the league starting this January.

I also learned that other pleas would execute the series, ranging from P500 to P600 for patron seats and P300-up for lower box seats.

"Don't you think the fans will complain, considering that they will be getting only half their money's worth under the new scheme?" I asked PBA commissioner Chito Salud when I bumped into him at a function Saturday yesterday.

Until Salud explained the plan to me, I didn't know that the daily playdate format would only be used in the crucial rounds of the conference, starting with the semifinals.

* * *

The purpose of spreading out the games to seven days, according to the commissioner, is to enable fans to focus and savor every game in the latter phase of the tournament. "It's not also fair to the teams if one match is aired too early, and only the second game gets watched in full," Salud said.

In addition to this, he said they also want the fans to get to know the players better.

"This plan has been on the drawing board for so long but could not be implemented because of the lack of venues to hold the games," Salud said.

When the conference is over, the PBA will revert to the original two-game schedule for the elimination round of the next conference.

* * *

A PBA that embodies high competition, genuine sportsmanship and unmatched excellence in whatever it does...this is the Salud's wish or vision for the league in 2012.

"This way the PBA fulfills not only its role of providing top entertainment to the fans, of serving as inspiration to aspiring athletes, of contributing to the overall national sports development. It will also serve as a window to the host that our people and country could be," he said.

* * *

For the New Year, we get a cross section of the current crop of PBA players to find out what their aspirations are:

Dylan Ababon's objective for the year, when a sibling of the Eastern aces is paralyzed, is simples: "My target is to have a good career in the PBA."

On the other hand, Petron Blaze star Ay Mangonon's wish for 2012 is to stay healthy.

"So I can return to active playing and help Petron win more championships," he said with a promise.

In addition to staying healthy, Ayo's prayer is for him and his family to stay whole and happy.

* * *

Other wishes for 2012:

Antonio Maping, last season's Most Valuable Player of Talk 'N Text: "That God continues to bless and watch my family and friends, as a way to start the New Year," He also wishes everyone a prosperous 2012.

Ogie Menor: "My wish is for everybody to see that I'm just a physical player and not a dirty player. I just capitalize on the physique God gave me. Peace to all the players, coaches. Happy New Year to all of you!"

Jayson Castro: "My wish is to be able to spend the holidays with our parents since they're in the United States."

Ryan Reyes: "Have's wishing more championships for my team, Talk 'N Text!"

Ronald Tubid: "I wish my family remains in excellent health, including me, so we can be together for a long time."

Gal Mercado: "I believe in the true meaning of Christmas and that's the birth of my Lord and savior Jesus Christ. He gave the ultimate gift that none but himself may can't, and that's eternal life!"

Santos paces player derby

By Musong R. Castillo

ABOVE Santos, the newly Petron Blaze power forward, leads every-one in the statistical points race and is well on his way to becoming the first player in seven years to win the PBA Best Player of the Conference award back-to-back.

With game averages of 18.3 points and 12.3 rebounds after the quarterfinal round of the Philippine Cup, the long-armed hunks is averaging 16.83 GPs, six points clear of the second-running Eelly Williams of powerhouse defending champion Talk 'N Text.

Santos is a shoo-in to make the final list of candidates for the Player of the Conference award. If he wins, the former Ike Eustaco U not will become the first player, after Bob Morik in 2004, to nab the award consecutively.

Santos' rebounding average is the best in the league and he is running fourth in scoring behind Petronas's Gary David's 22.5 points per game, B-Meg's James Yap's 19 ppg and Petron rookie Chris Lutz's 18.33 ppg.

Alex Cabagnot, another Petron standout, logs third with 31.88 Mls followed by Yap 13.36), Talk 'N Text's Harvey Carey (30.77), David (30.69), Tropang Texter Jason Castro (30.64), Powerade's Alvin Lauzon (29.16), Meralco's Ed Villar Miller (26.68) and Alaska's Sonny Thoss (26.50).

The top five candidates after the first-of-seven semifinals that starts on Jan. 4 will make the final list of candidates, and David would have to pile up big numbers in the figure series against Ilolo or Xlane numbers for the award.

David has had the most memorable performance by anyone in the tournament, he exploded for 37 points against B-Meg that ranked the top-seeded Llamados.

Williams, the 2008 MVP, posted 32.00% GPs a game.

Williams and Santos have an ongoing rivalry with Williams winning the Rookie of the Year award when Santos was named the league in 2007.

Santos was also second when Williams pocketed the MVP in 2008.

Had Lee, Slats or Mixie's super rookie, is in 11th spot with 16.27 GPs a game. The former University of the East ace has averages of 13.7 points, 4.5 rebounds, 4.1 assists and almost one steal to lead the Painters in all three departments.

The winners of the Player of the Conference award automatically becomes a contender for the season's MVP citation.

David, Yap, Lutz and Santos come in thus order in the scoring race, followed by Lauzon (15.25), Miller (15.03), Castro (15.00), Asi Taulava (14.86), Jeff Chan (13.56), Thoss (13.36) then Mixie Carlson (13.33).

Carey's 13.33 rebounds is second only to Santos' head with Powerade's Doug Kramer in third with 10.8488. Jay-R Reyes of Alaska has 10 boards a game with Asi Taulava (9.3158), Ali Peek (9.0833), James Yap (9.029), Thoss (9.0357), Gabby Espinas (9.120) and Williams (8.837) rounding out the Top 10.

ABOVE Santos of Petron Blaze hangs on to the rim after a dunk, one of the greatest hazes of his all-around game.

Khan's conqueror possible Pacquiao foe

PETERSON

By Ray Lauzo

COUNT Lamont Peterson among Manny Pacquiao's probable opponents to May or June.

The newly crowned International Boxing Federation/World Boxing Association junior welterweight champion has emerged as a serious threat for following his split-decision triumph over former titlist Amir Khan on Dec. 10 in Las Vegas.

Khan trains alongside Pacquiao under new boxing Hall of Fame trainer Freddie Roach at the Wild Card Gym in Hollywood.

It was Roach who first broached the idea of a Pacquiao-Peterson showdown, taking into account Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s three-month jail sentence that starts on Jan. 6.

Before Peterson's stunner over Khan and Mayweather's conviction, the names being floated were Juan Manuel Marquez, who wants a fourth crack at Pacquiao; World Boxing Organization junior welterweight king Tim Bradley and World Boxing Association junior middleweight Miguel Cotto, who is seeking vengeance for the 12th-round stoppage handed him by the Filipino ring icon late in 2009.

According to Lou Sutter field of Ring Prizes, Pacquiao-adviser Michael Koncz, who is in Las Vegas, said that Peterson is among the options he will examine as Top Rank chief Bob Arum for the lucrative representative's next fight.

Though Peterson fights in the 140-pound division, he is three inches taller than Pacquiao at 5-foot-9, has a seven-inch reach advantage and owners the ring as a heavier weight.

Against Khan, Peterson fought at 135 lb, while Pacquiao has never exceeded 140 lb at fight night.

The 29-year-old Peterson (28-1-1 with 11 knockouts), however, is deemed a Spike number compared with Pacquiao (54-3-2, 38 KOs).

Thailand aces in PH Ladies Open

THAILAND will be sending a weak squad made up of veterans and young stars to vie for top honors in the 50th staging of the Philippine Ladies Open that tees off Jan. 11 at the Orbit Wack Wack Golf and Country Club in Mandaluyong.

Led by Southeast Asian Games silver medalist Pimrada Loonboonruang, the Thais will also be represented by several members of their junior program.

Loonboonruang, who is also the reigning champion in the Aussie Cup, the ladies side of the Southeast Asia Amateur Golf Team Championship, aims to become just the third Thai to win the 54-hole event after PBA Hall of Famer Jenny Lascuna in 1981 and Supaporn Kerdpaiboon in 2007.

Champion Infinity is the tournament's title sponsor.

Registration to the Women's Golf Association of the Philippines event is still ongoing. Tournament fee is P7,000 or $170 and deadline for listing is Dec. 30. For inquiries, log on to www.wgap.golf.com, or e-mail 50thladiesopen@senator.sport-gi.com, or text or call 0908 8810366 or (632) 6406073 (fax).

Dong Pere Philippines, the Philippine Sports Commission and the Philippine Daily Inquirer are gold sponsors.

The 50th holding of the event has also drawn entries from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Netherlands and the United States.

Class A and Class B competitions are also on tap as the organizing WGAP expects a massive field.

Other facets were not as the spectacle of the lead change as the game for a repeat of her six-shot victory at The Country Club last year.

The reigning Thailand Ladies Open champion, who also won the Aboitiz Am and the Royal Selangor Open, will try to become the first back-to-back winner of the event since Thidi Chaiwat in 2002-03.

(Musong R. Castillo

Carlos-Gonzales zooms ahead with 4-under 64

By Musong R. Castillo

JOBOY Carlos-Reynoldo Gonzales assembled a four-under-par 64 to four balls yesterday to assume control in the first National Doubles Amateur championship at the APP Golf Club.

Carlos-Gonzales opened and closed with birdies and picked up two more in between to create a two-stroke first-round cliffer to Glen Sharp-Marvin Monteros with a 7-68 total going into today's weekend rage-quit final round.

Sharp and Monteros, who fired a '72 in the foursomes on Monday, dropped two shots to their last three holes to settle for a 67-139 and allow Lawrence Celestino-Joey Herrera to catch them in second spot.

Celestino-Herrera assembled a happy-free 68 to make it a three-way fight for the title.

Sharp-Delos Santos and Ricky Winters, one shot off the pace in the first round, carded a 69 to slide to fourth at 142 while Eric Gallardo and JP De Claro posted a 1-03 after a 69.

Lexi Uy and Hoda Uy also surged ahead in Group B after a par 68 for a total of 143, five shots clear of erstwhile leaders Lucy Panuganan and Joey Sola (74-148), while Sarah Pia Marquina and Chanelle Bonnick kept their three-shot lead in ladies play.

(Musong R. Castillo

Lesnar-Overeem UFC collision on Balls

NEED MARTIN. ars superstars Brock Edward Lesnar and Alistair Overeem clash in the Ultimate Fighting Championship's (UFC) final showdown of the year in Las Vegas.

The blockbuster bout, dubbed as "UFC 141: Lesnar vs Overeem," will be aired at 11:30 a.m. this Saturday on Balls (SkyCable channel 34).

The 6-foot-3 Lesnar, the reigning heavyweight champion, lost to Frank Mir in his UFC debut in 2007.

But the former top amateur wrestler gained ground the following year when he mauled the UFC heavyweight championship from Randy Couture, before avenging his loss to Mir in UFC 100.

Overeem, the Netherlands heavyweight king, holds the distinction as the only fighter in combat sports to capture a world title in both the MMA and K-1 kickboxing.

Also lined up to the UFC 141 event is the welterweight battle between Jon Fitch and Johny Hendricks.

Meanwhile, sportscaster Beau Gonzales will recap this year's top UFC fights on "Gameday with Beau Gonzales" at 9:30 p.m. on Balls.

A roundup of 2011's celebrated sporting events, including the 26th Southeast Asian Games, will also be aired at 8:30 tonight, while the top basketball news will be shown at 8:30 p.m. tomorrow.

Bloemen Golf Cup dangles handsome prizes

A BRAND-new car from Hyundai and a Vespa motorbike are two of the hole-in-one prizes for the 20th Bishop Alphonsus Bloemen Golf Cup set Jan. 30, 2012 at the Forest Hills Golf and Country Club in Antipolo City.

As Solis graduates are invited to join the tournament from December to "Drive for a Cause," a yearly fund raising project of the La Salle Green Hills Alumni Association (LSGHAA) for the benefit of the Adult Night High School Scholarship Fund.

The program has provided free La Salle education to 9,000 less fortunate scholars since 1979. The tournament is the 20th edition of the eighteen 218.2 Master Golf Tour.

Handsome trophies and lots of valuable raffle prizes also await the winners in Class A, B, C, Seniors, Friends/Guests, as well as the Batch Championship.

For inquiries, call the LSGHAA office at 725-2709 or 726-8450. Early registration will get good hole assignments for the shotgun start.

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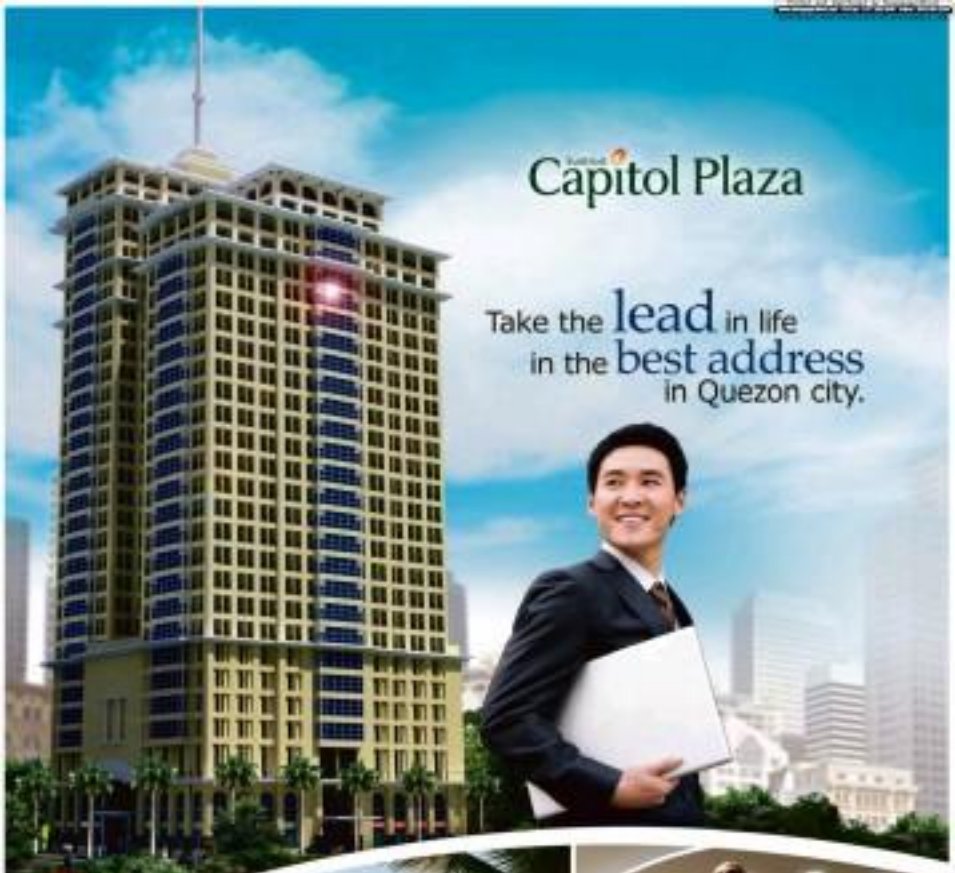

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Aplus METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday
Mobile/Red: Sun/SMC 09.09.09/TM | Mobile: www.inquirer.net/metro | E-mail: pi_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Text-a-tsismis hotline: inquirer.net/newsgirl/tsismis/ or 4467

Blueair
Eliminate Firecracker Smoke Fast

Cops file rap vs fake car theft victim

49-year-old trader breaks down during questioning, says he pawned car

By Nancy C. Carvajal

THE POLICE have warned the public against filing fake car theft reports after they filed a complaint against a man who reported the loss of his vehicle but was later found to be lying.

Senior Supt. Ferdinand Villanueva, chief of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) station that will, said that Alexander Peralta, a 49-year-old businessman from Caloocan City, was charged with perjury before the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office yesterday.

This was after he confessed that he lied about the loss of his car, a brand new white Kia Rio (PDR 123).

Based on the report he filed with the police, Peralta said that his car was stolen on Dec. 22 while it was parked outside a drug store on Tandang Sora in Novaliches, Quezon City, sometime between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m.

He reported the theft the following day to members of the QCPD Station 4.

However, Villanueva said that investigators PO2 Brixhaus Ildefonso and PO2 Dennis Tolentino became suspicious when they observed Peralta's "unusual movements" as they were asking him about the loss of his car.

At one point, Peralta suddenly started crying and singing a different tune.

"He broke down and admitted that he had pawned the vehicle to a man from a cockpit for P180,000," Villanueva said.

Peralta confessed that he

CONTINUED ON A10

LUCKY CHARMS
Round and roo-ss round fruits are in abundance at San Andres Public Market in Manila. Many believe that having round fruits on the table on New Year's Eve will bring in luck for the coming year. NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

Caloocan hospital ready for injured on New Year's Eve

By Kristine Felisse Marguroy

INTO ready.

Officials of a public hospital in Caloocan City yesterday assured residents that everything was in place for the expected increase in the number of firecracker victims during the New Year revelry.

"We have already assigned additional personnel who will be working starting Dec. 31," Jocelyn Gubia, a medical officer of Dr. Jose Rodriguez Memorial Medical Center, told the Inquirer.

In her department, for example, Gubia said that a total of eight nurses would be working the night shift, two more than the usual number deployed on an ordinary day.

"The group of six nurses will work from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. We have added two more nurses who will be on duty from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. to attend to patients who are expected to come, especially [on] the night of Dec. 31," she added.

"In case those in need for surgery, three doctors will go on duty for 24 hours.

On a regular day, only one surgeon handles the 24-hour shift, according to Gubia.

"The three surgeons are aside from the others who are also on call," she said.

The hospital on R. Mabini Street has also stocked up on medical supplies, Edwina Bean, administrative officer, told the Inquirer.

According to her, management has added more than 20 units of each medical essential, including hand-aids, gauzes, ointments and injectable medicines.

Gubia added that overall, the medical supplies were more than enough to take care of the needs of between 100 and 150 patients.

"In the period from Dec. 21 to Jan. 5, we expect only 50 to 60 patients. But of course, we have to have additional supplies just in case the number of [patients] eventually exceeds our expectations," she said.

At press time, the hospital has recorded two cases of holiday revelry-related injuries.

On Saturday, two young girls were rushed to the emergency room after they

CALOOCAN A10

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Man who took 5-year-old girl hostage was high on drugs, say police

By Nikko Calleja

TAYTAY policemen successfully resolved a hostage-taking drama on Monday night after one of its members overpowered a third-wedding man who took a five-year-old girl hostage.

Supt. Jay Marangoung, Taytay Police chief, identified the hostage-taker as Alfredo Plana, 43, who was just visiting his sister in Laguna Arenda. As he was walking on the street at around 6:30 p.m. on Monday, he met a man whom he stabbed with a knife.

Marangoung said that Plana later admitted to the police that he was high on drugs at the time of the incident.

"He thought someone who wanted to kill him was following him," the police official added.

The man who Plana stabbed was identified as Salvador Verano.

He was taken to Amang Rodriguez Medical Center where he was reported to be in stable condition.

The police said that after the stabbing, bystanders chased Plana, hoping to pacify him.

Plana, however, picked up one of the children nearby and took her to his sister's house.

"The negotiators took at least two hours. When I realized [that Plana] was no longer in his right mind and had been threatening the child, I ordered my men to control him," Marangoung said.

Policemen forced their way into the house where one of them overpowered the hostage taker and rescued the girl who was later treated for minor injuries.

Marangoung said the Taytay police were preparing to file the necessary charges against Plana.

P128M allotted for school damaged in plane crash

By Bonnie W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT has allocated P128 million from this year's calamity fund to replace a school building in Barangay Ibo in Cagayan de Oro City which was razed by fire after a plane crashed into a nearby cassava lot beside a row of shanties in Barter Living Subdivision earlier this month.

According to a statement issued by Budget Secretary Florencio B. Abad, the money will be used for the "immediate" construction of a new 80-classroom building for Immaculate Elementary School.

Abad said that the calamity fund was tapped because the Department of Education (DepEd) quick response fund had already been earmarked for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of other projects.

"A thorough evaluation by the DepEd found irreparable damages to the building, which then had to be completely demolished," he added.

Abad said that the new building, once completed, should be able to accommodate the school's 1,052 students.

"We still hold enough resources so the school administration can conduct a single-shift program for its students instead of putting them on the usual double shift," Abad added.

"Once the reconstruction is finished, classes will be back to normal and students can have a school environment more conducive to learning," he said.

In a related development, the budget chief said that the government was allotting P90.2 million for a comprehensive scholarship program to support 1,958 scholars in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and rotary easy medicine education.

"We need to develop a steady base of competent professionals who will unlock the potential of our agriculture and fisheries sectors," Abad stated.

The money which will come from the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund covers the full amount of tuition and other fees, and will be paid directly to the schools concerned.

Established in 1994, the fund is meant to support farmers and fisherfolk cooperatives, and agribusiness entrepreneurs to compete in an increasingly globalized agriculture market.

ALL SET
Members of the National Capital Region Police Office display their long firearms after the yearly reading of the oath by which shooting rope to prevent any indiscriminate firing during New Year's Eve.

Man spills used oil, leaves notes on Ninoy, Cory tombs

By Mike Navallo

POLICE are looking for a man who vandalized the tomb of President Aquino's parents permanently over the weekend at Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque City.

In a phone interview, city police chief Senior Supt. Billy Belmonte said the incident was reported to authorities by members of the Presidential Security Group on Sunday.

Belmonte said the man spilled black liquid, later discovered to be used oil, on top of the tombs of martyred Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr. and his wife, former President Corazon Aquino.

Scribbled notes were also taped onto the sides of the tombs.

"From what we read in the messages, the act appears to be the handiwork of a person who was not in the right frame of mind," he added.

The police official described the notes as "incoherent." Written in Pilipino, most of the legible portion of the notes were about the dance group "Sexy Bomb," he said.

The Sex Bomb Girls gained popularity about a decade ago for their sexy dances shown on a popular television noontime show.

Witnesses told police that the man had been spotted lingering near the tomb for quite some time, but was later chased away.

In 1998, the elder Aquino's tomb was pried open by vandals, but authorities said the body was left untouched.

Not left out this Yuletide, MMDA's job order workers get cash, rice, movie pass

By Mike Navallo

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) handed out bonuses to all 300 of the agency's job order employees, in accordance with a national government directive providing incentives to all state workers.

MMDA Chair Francis Tolentino said all job order workers received P7,000 to cash and a sack of rice.

"The job order teams can't covered by employer-employee relations. They are not considered contractual nor permanent employees," he said, in reaction to statements that the bonus were delayed.

"We have no obligation to give them a Christmas bonus but we included them in the spirit of Christmas," he added.

President Aquino signed an executive order earlier this month granting a one-time performance enhancement incentive (PEI) of P33,000 to all regular, contractual or casual and temporary employees of the executive department.

Budget Secretary Florencio Abad said the national government's "improved expenditures and fiscal management" made it possible for the State to give bureaucrats state workers.

In previous years, the national government only paid P7,000 and let other agencies cough up the remaining P3,000, which was charged to their savings for the year.

Since not all agencies are able to charge such an amount to their savings, the national government decided to shoulder everything this year.

Tolentino said the bonuses of job order employees were taken from the agency's savings.

In addition to the cash gift and the sack of rice, job order workers also received movie passes for the MMDA-organized Metro Manila Film Festival.

The PEI had also been extended to the MMDA's regular and contractual employees, who will also receive a sack of rice each, Tolentino said.

Cops file rap

From page B-9

thought of filing a false report because he did not have the money to redeem his car.

According to Teles, this was not the first time that they filed a perjury charge against a cop, punch car theft victim.

"Some admit it by but we are very rigid [about] questioning supposed victim because insurance companies can also hold us liable for false claims," he said.

"We do not want to be accused of being in cahoots with our members so we do not prioritize those police reports on stolen cars," he added.

The assistant city prosecutor has recommended bail of P6,000 for Pacalso's temporary liberty.

FOUNTAIN OF JOY
Children break into smiles as they watch the dancing fountain at Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City.

Caloocan hospital ready

From page A11

...worst hit by many bullets.

SPC Reynaldo Tarra, 9, and Senior Chadwick Ordinario, 11, were discharged after they received treatment.

Firecracker ban

Meanwhile, Caloocan Mayor Enrico Echiverri yesterday said that he would designate several areas throughout the city where residents would be allowed to launch or light firecrackers to prevent injuries or deaths due to the use of pyrotechnics.

"Those caught lighting firecrackers in nondesignated areas will be apprehended and penalized accordingly," he added.

In previous years, it was the Caloocan City police, members of the Behavioral Department of Public Safety and Traffic Management and barangay officials who strictly enforced Echiverri's directive.

This year, the officials of each of the city's 188 barangays will be in charge of making sure that the mayor's order will be properly implemented.

According to the mayor, each barangay will have a designated firecracker zone which will be picked based on already-established safety standards.

MetroBriefs

QC to honor gender sensitive film

THE QUEZON City government will be recognizing one of the entries in this year's Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) for promoting gender sensitivity and awareness. The award for 2011 Most Gender Sensitive Film will be chosen by the city government through the Gender and Development (Resource and Coordinating Office-QUEZCID) created by Ordinance No. 2002-2011. Cecilia Dy, QCGAD Board and the MMFF Board. MMFF entries now include independent films under the MMFF's New Wave category, giving a wider array of choices. A panel of judges separate from the MMFF's movie critics may have selected and announced. Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte said the panel is composed of leaders in the filmmaker community and gender experts from the city government, academe, non-government organizations, media and the education sector. "Each one of the movies pictures will undergo careful screening from violence and other gender biases against women," Mayor Belmonte said. GADBCO will also sponsor an essay-writing contest for public school students on the winning gender sensitive film.

Julie M. Aurelio

Man dies on street

FOR TWO hours, a 29-year-old barangay tanod lay dying while a carpenter at driver who was busy fixing a flat tire remained oblivious to his condition in Manila. A barangay policeman later identified only the body of Jerry Gutang, a tanod of Barangay 691 Zone 69 police...

...day morning. SPO1 Charles John Duran of the Manila Police District Station 5 (Tondo) said that the 25-year-old truck driver Jerry Sumbo, a resident of Gagalangin, was on his...

...Duran said the truck driver and a companion unavailably parked their truck to change the flat tire and noticed a man lying on the pavement nearby. Sumbo told police investigators that they wanted to check on the man but they suddenly heard him shout at the top of his voice before lying back on the pavement, making them conclude that the man was drunk and wanted to be left alone.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Did you know

ACCORDING to data from the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, the 36th Metro Manila Film Festival had last year earned over P400.5 million from Dec. 25 to Jan. 7, 2011. This was around 24 percent higher than the film fest's earnings of P437.9 million in 2009. Ruth Abatayo, Inquirer Research

METRO
NEW
Citizen's Call
Metro Citizen's Call has a new number that's easier to remember and remember. Starting in mid-January, you can report your concerns on traffic, crime, and other issues to the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) by simply texting or calling 4467.
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Text your concerns in 4467 (Metro). If you can, attach the photo of your concern and send this text. Starting December 15, this same way to make Metro Manila a safer, cleaner, healthier and an even better place to live in.
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To 4467
P.S. Please don't send text jokes or criminal activities and scams. Call the police.
INQUIRER

Decades later, a Cold War era secret is finally revealed

THIS image shows a declassified photo of a man standing next to a satellite camera at session from the Hexagon program. Dubbed the "Big Bird," it was the most successful space spy satellite program of the Cold War era. AP

DAYBREAK, Connecticut—for more than a decade they toiled in the strange, boxy-looking building on the hill above the municipal airport, the building with an ominous concept in the underworld, the building filled with secrets.

They were engineers, scientists, technicians and "computer—"total clods-and-dagger guys," says Fred Marra, 78, with a hearty laugh.

He is sitting in the food court in the Danbury Fair mall, where a group of retired coworkers from the former Perkin-Elmer Corp. gather for a weekly coffee. Graysheaved now and hard of hearing, they have been meeting here for 18 years. They while away a few hours swapping about golf and politics, illnesses and grandchildren. But until recently, they were forbidden to speak about the greatest achievement of their professional lives.

"We, Hexagon," Ed Newton says, gleefully rebelling the word that still feels almost treasonous to utter in public.

It was dubbed "Big Bird" and it was rumored the most successful space spy satellite program of the Cold War era. From 1971 to 1986 a total of 20 satellites were launched, each one taking 100 kilometers of film and sophisticated cameras that orbited the earth snapping vast, panoramic photographs of the Soviet Union, China and other potential foes. The film was then sent through the earth's atmosphere in buckets that parachuted over the Pacific Ocean, where C-130 Air Force planes snagged them with grappling hooks.

The scale, precision and sheer ingenuity of Hexagon KH-9 was breathtaking. The fact that 19 out of 20 launches were successful (the final mission blew up because the booster rockets failed) is astonishing.

So too is the human tale of the 45-year-old secret that many took to their graves.

Hexagon was declassified in September. Finally Marra, Newton and others can tell the world what they worked on all those years at "the office."

"My name is Al Gaylart and I built spy satellites for a living," announced the 84-year-old retired engineer to the stunned bartender in his local tavern as soon as he learned of the declassification. He proudly reports the line set off chuckles.

"It was intensely demanding, thrilling and the greatest experience of my life," says Gaylart, who says travel tonight from college until was one of the youngest members of the Hexagon "brotherhood."

He describes the white-hot excitement as teams raced over hand drawings and worked on endless technical problems, saying, "Slide rules and advanced degrees!" (There were no computers). Knowing they were part of such a compli mented space project. The intensity would increase as launch deadlines loomed and on the days when "the cameras"—the CIA and, later, the Air Force—came for briefings. It's at least one occasion, former President George H.W. Bush, who was then CIA director, flew into Danbury for a tour of the plant. AP

Man tries to take 247 animals on plane

BUENOS AIRES—A Czech national was nabbed in Argentina for trying to board a commercial flight with 247 live animals including poisonous snakes and endangered reptiles packed in a bulging suitcase, reports said on Monday.

The man identified as Karel Abelovsky, 31, was caught while trying to board a flight for Madrid when checked baggage X-ray technicians and staff at the Buenos Aires International Airport in greater Buenos Aires noticed "organic substances moving inside," local media reported.

When they opened the bag, they found more than 200 reptiles and mollusks, among them nine species of pythons, Argentine prosecutor Jorge Di Lello told the Ambito.com newspaper.

The venomous lizards, including two species—which can measure up to 1.5 meters—and several young boas.

Some of the animals were reported to be extremely rare and protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Two of the animals were found dead and most of the others could have suffered the same fate due to a lack of oxygen if the suitcase had been placed in the plane's cargo area.

The discovery was made on Dec. 7 but only recently came to light. A judge has charged Abelovsky with attempted smuggling, and he faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

Prosecutors suspect that no exotic species smuggling ring was behind the misfitting attempt. AFP

Paul building US campaign on doomsday scenarios

PAUL

WASHINGTON—The man who might win the Republican party's first presidential contest, long counted from Chat the United States can borrow its way out of the US money supply.

Campaigning for the Jan. 3 Iowa caucuses, Ron Paul warns of crushing civil liberties, a bucket Union-style economic collapse and violence in the streets.

The Texas congressman, author of "End the Fed," also wants to eliminate the central banking system that underpins the world's largest economy.

"Not only would we audit the Federal Reserve, we may well curtail the Federal Reserve," Paul told a cheering crowd of more than 300 in this small Iowa city last week.

Paul, 76, is having questions for racist writings that appeared under his name two decades ago, which he has disavowed as the work of "ghost writers."

But Paul's dark libertarian, precedent, ultimately could founder, analysts and others say. Invocate of increasing questions about how his unorthodox vision of government would work in the real world.

Republican rivals criticize his strident isolationist approach to foreign policy as dangerously naive, and others in his plans to slash the government's budget and pull back US troops from overseas.

Nonpartisan analysts say his economic proposals—chiefly spending cuts, elimination of the Federal Reserve and a return to the gold standard—would plunge the country back into recession.

"Paul appeals to people who are fed up of regular names in no particular [case] he sees conspiracies where there are none," said Dieg Sullivan, chief political strategist at Precinct Research Group, an analysis firm. "If he does well in Iowa, which is likely, it will be an enormous embarrassment to the Republicans."

However, Paul's calls for a dramatically limited government and a hands-off foreign policy are resonating among voters who have grown deeply alienated from Washington after a decade of war and nearly five years of economic misery.

"Obama got into office and I can't tell the difference between him and Bush," said Donna Fromm, a homemaker from Bloomfield, Iowa, citing President Barack Obama's support for policies such as the Wall Street bailout and the war in Afghanistan that began under George W. Bush.

Polls show Paul jockeying for the lead in the Iowa caucuses, and political observers say his organization in the state is unmatched. His campaign maps show hundreds of enthusiastic supporters, along with undecided voters who are giving him a look.

On the campaign trail, he reaches out to Tea Party supporters on the right and Occupy Wall Street supporters on the left.

Some potential supporters from the left have been put off by Paul's unresponding campaign for the free market.

In a campaign stop in this small city of about 7,000, Heal said breast cancer survivor Danielle Lin that insurance companies should not be required to offer coverage to people who are already sick.

"It's sort of like me living on the Gulf Coast, and buying insurance until I see the hurricane," said Paul, whose Galveston, Texas district was devastated by a hurricane in 2008. "Insurance is supposed to insurance risk."

Paul's response left Lin in tears. While her insurance covered her treatment, she said, several of her friends were not so fortunate.

"I watched three friends die because they didn't have insurance," said Lin, a registered Democrat who is looking for a Republican candidate to support this time.

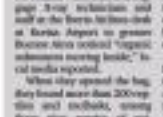
"Nobody can afford private insurance, nobody can. And they're dead."

Heal can was apocalyptic as he warns of the dangers of a debt-laced economy and a deeply indebted government. His doomsday scenario often are incomplete, leaving listeners room to fill in the blanks.

He draws parallels between the current situation in the United States and that of the former Soviet Union, whose economy collapsed under the crushing burden of military and civil amount in 1991.

Paul acknowledges that his proposal to avoid that outcome—an immediate, $1 trillion spending cut that would slash the federal budget by more than one-third and eliminate the departments of Education, Energy, Commerce, Interior, and Housing and Urban Development—could have some unpleasant side effects.

"I'm afraid of violence coming," he told a crowd of more than 600 in Bettendorf, Iowa. "When you see what the government is preparing for and the arrears and military law, and the demonstrations in the streets, some people aren't going to be convinced so easily that you don't owe them a living." Reuters



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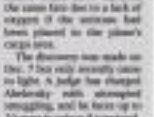

SCHIBBYE

Swedish journalists jailed in Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA—Ethiopian court on Tuesday sentenced two Swedish journalists to 11 years in jail for supporting terrorism and entering the country illegally, after a trial criticized by rights groups.

"The convictions should be punishment of 11 years imprisonment," Judge Shemsu Sirgaga told the court in the Amharic language through a translator.

"This sentence should satisfy the goal of peace and security," he added.

Reporter Martin Schibbye and photographer Johan Persson were arrested in Ethiopia's Ogaden region on July 1 in the company of rebels from the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) after entering Ethiopia from Somalia.

Both Swedes showed no emotion as the sentencing, as if in shock, according to an AFP reporter in the court.

Prosecutors last week as the verdict had called for a maximum sentence of 18 years and six months in prison.

Their conviction, last Wednesday, answered a barrage of criticism from Swedish and international rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

Defense lawyer Abebe Bakeka said the pair would decide later in the week whether to appeal against the sentencing.

"I am not satisfied, as a lawyer for the defendants, I do not agree with the decision," Abebe said outside the court.

"We will be talking to them (the Swedes) again on Thursday and then we will decide again on our plans on whether to appeal," he said, adding that the judges had originally planned to give the Swedes a longer jail term.

"The court has actually passed 14 years six months for, and then mitigated it down," he said, noting the sentence was reduced because of the expiration of the defendants and also that they have never been involved in crime before."

Both journalists had admitted contact with the ONLF and in entering Ethiopia illegally, but rejected terrorism charges and the prosecution's story had received weapons training.

Following their conviction, Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt said Schibbye and Persson were innocent and should be set free.

The two said they met ONLF chiefs in Londons and Nairobi before meeting with about 20 members of the group in Ethiopia, about 40 kilometers from the Somali border.

Persson said their meeting the ONLF contacts had been for professional reasons only as members of their investigation of the activities of Swedish oil company Lundin Oil the two were to report on.

The ONLF has been fighting for independence of the remote southeastern Ogaden region since 1984, claiming they have been marginalized from Addis Ababa.

Last month, charges of participating in terrorism were dropped for lack of evidence. AFP

Concerns raised over breast implants

CHANTAL Guerin, a 48-year-old accountant, shows a breast implant made by Poly Implant Prothese that was removed from her left breast. AP

WASHINGTON—As early as 2000, US health authorities raised concerns about the French breast implant maker at the heart of a scandal affecting hundreds of thousands of women worldwide. That was about 10 years before the company came under scrutiny from European regulators.

The US Food and Drug Administration says an investigator in inspect a plant run by the manufacturer, Poly Implant Prothese (PIP), in Seyne Sur Mer in southeastern France in May 2000. Shortly afterwards, the FDA sent the company's founder, Jean-Claude Mas, a warning letter saying the implants were "adulterated" and citing at least 11 deviations from good manufacturing practices.

The problems had to do with PIP's silicone implants, a different line from the silicone implants that French authorities ordered off the market in 2010 for using industrial-grade silicone instead of medical-grade silicone, according to the French Health Products Safety Agency. Still, the plant inspected by the FDA was used to manufacture the silicone implants for PIP.

The French government last week recommended that women in France who have PIP's silicone gel-filled implants get them removed by their surgeons after the implants appeared to have an unusually high rupture rate. Other countries, including Britain and Brazil, said women should visit their surgeons for checks.

A standard question is why the FDA's warning didn't trigger greater scrutiny of PIP's activities by regulators in France and elsewhere. Officials at the FDA and France's health regulator were not available for comment on Monday on whether the FDA shared information about its inspection of the PIP plant, though the warning letter was made public in 2006.

No one has been charged in the case.

Sinoven said a Montellier court could soon announce criminal charges against four to six PIP employees.

There is also an investigation into involuntary homicide by French authorities, following the death from cancer of a woman last year. She had received PIP implants. The French government has not presented any evidence of an increased cancer risk from the product.

Mas' lawyer Yves Haddad told Reuters on Monday that his 72-year-old client is in poor health but ready to respond to any court summons. Haddad denied that Mas was in hiding, reiterating that he was still in southern France's Var region.

"He's currently in very bad health because he has just undergone a difficult surgery that prevents him from walking," Haddad said. "He is worried by the importance this matter is taking on. He is angry at those who mistakenly add to people's suffering," the lawyer added.

Reuters was unable to personally reach him to ask about the PIP's findings.

The US concerns about PIP's saline implants more than 11 years ago could mean that there are safety issues for more women than the 300,000 worldwide who received the company's silicone implants. The number of women with PIP saline implants worldwide and the safety record of the device could not be immediately verified.

The FDA's letter was cited in a lawsuit filed in the US District Court in Los Angeles on behalf of Texas on behalf of US patients who received the saline implants in the late 1990s, and one who received them as recently as 2001. The plaintiffs said that the implants deflated several years later.

Deflation can be a problem with breast implants. The key issue is whether the incidence suffered by a particular product is higher than health authorities deem to be acceptable. Reuters

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Greco

North Korea prepares lavish funeral

SEOUL—North Korea was on Tuesday preparing a massive ceremonial farewell to late leader Kim Jong-il as it strove to strengthen a new personality cult around his youthful son and successor Jong-un.

The secretive state has so far given no details of Wednesday's funeral for its "Dear Leader" of the past 17 years and has not invited foreign delegations to the ceremony.

But analysts say the regime, as it did in 1994 when Kim Jong-il's own father died, will use the event to elevate up-to-play to the new leader and will likely mobilize hundreds of thousands of people.

The cortege, aged only in his late 20s, has been thrust into the world spotlight since his father died suddenly on Dec. 17 aged 69.

Official media has added several titles to his flimsy CV, declaring him "great successor," supreme commander of the world's fourth largest military and head of the ruling party's powerful Central Committee.

The son, who has not yet been formally appointed to the party and military posts, has been the central figure in scenes of mourning at the Kumsusan Memorial Palace, where his father lies in state in a glass coffin.

On Monday he met the leaders of two South Korean delegations at the palace, expressing thanks for their presence.

Jong-un, "great successor to the Juche (self-reliance) revolutionary cause and supreme leader of our party, state, army and people, is at the helm of the Korean revolution," the North's news agency reported early Tuesday.

But while Kim Jong-il had 20 years to prepare for the succession, the world's only dynastic succession, Jong-un has had barely three. Analysts will closely watch the funeral for clues about who will most influence him.

South Korean media, basing predictions on arrangements for the 1994 funeral, said the cortege would likely begin at 11 a.m. (1100 GMT) on Wednesday, with Jong-un and senior officials paying final respects at the memorial palace.

They said the military was expected to fire a 24-gun salute and troops would march through central Pyongyang, accompanying a limousine carrying Kim's coffin and another car with a state photo.

Military marching bands would play funeral music while convoys of motorcycles and cars carrying flowers and senior officials would follow the coffin as hundreds of thousands looked on, the media forecast.

Mourning will officially end on Thursday with a nationwide memorial service including a three-minute silence at noon.

"Mourning does still be held in Pyongyang (Thursday) and all provincial units across the country and down subunit of military will be observed by people across the country," the North's official news agency said.

Trains, ships and other vehicles or machinery would sound their hooters.

Leader Kim Jong-il, the North ruled long range missiles and two atomic weapons, earning international sanctions.

Diplomatic efforts to revive stalled six-nation nuclear disarmament talks had seemed to be making headway before his death.

The South's nuclear envoy will visit the United States this week to discuss ways to resume the dialogue and the aftermath of Kim's death, Seoul's foreign ministry said.

Lim Sung-nam was to meet Glyn Davies, the US special representative on North Korea policy.

South Korea, which has resisted technically at war with the North for six decades, has responded cautiously to the shake-up in its neighbor, which has seen two deadly border incidents last year.

Unlike in 1994, the Seoul government expressed sympathy to the North's people and made other conciliatory gestures. AFP

MOURNERS line up in Kim Il-sung Square to pay respects to late North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang, North Korea, early Monday

INDIA'S World Hindu Council activists burn an effigy partly representing Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and reservation for Muslims at a protest in New Delhi yesterday

Arab League monitors arrive in Syria

DAMASCUS—A first team of Arab League observers landed in Syria late Monday to monitor a deal to end nine months of deadly violence, as 20 people died in gunfire in and near the besieged central city of Homs.

CNN reported that members of the team were due to travel on Tuesday to Homs, which has been a focal point of the government's crackdown on anti-regime demonstrations and the site of fierce clashes between the army and dissenters.

The mission is part of an Arab plan endorsed by Syria on Nov. 2 that calls for the withdrawal of security forces from towns and residential districts as well as to violence against civilians and the release of detainees.

Since signing the deal, President Bashar al-Assad's regime has been accused of ostensibly ignoring its crackdown, which has shown no signs of slowing since it erupted in March and which the UN says has killed more than 5,000 people.

The private Dunya television channel, which is close to Assad's regime, said "a delegation of 50 observers arrived on Monday evening in Damascus," adding that 10 team members were Egyptian.

Gen. Mohammed Ahmed Mustafa al-Dabi, a veteran Sudanese military intelligence officer heading the Arab observer mission, had arrived in the Syrian capital on Sunday.

Syria's opposition meanwhile urged United Nations and Arab League intervention as the speed of violence continued.

Syrian National Council (SNC) head Burhan Ghalioun told reporters in Paris that some monitors were already in Homs "but they are saying they cannot go where the authorities do not want them to go."

A senior Arab League official said Cairo-based observer delegation will go to Homs on Tuesday.

Activists urged UN and Arab League intervention "to put an end to this tragedy," and called on the UN Security Council to "adopt the Arab League's plan and ensure that it is applied."

"It is better if the UN Security Council takes the (Arab League) plan, adopts and provides the means for its application," Ghalioun said. "This would give it more force."

The Arab "plan to defuse the crisis is a good plan, but I do not believe the Arab League really has the means" to enforce it, he said.

"The observers are working in conditions that the Arab League has described as not being good...I think we have not properly negotiated the working conditions of the observers," Ghalioun added.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said "rocket fire and heavy machine guns in the Baba Amr quarter" of Homs killed 18 people.

"The situation is frightening and the shelling in the area is worse of the past three days," it said in a statement received by AFP in Nicosia.

Eleven civilians died in other parts of Homs and its suburbs, and a woman was killed at "Al-Basel near the city, it said.

Another four people, including a 14-year-old boy, were shot dead by security forces in neighboring Hama province on Monday, and two were killed in the northwestern province of Idlib.

Four army deserters died in clashes with loyalists near the Turkish border village of Al-Yamadi, and explosions were heard amid fighting between deserters and soldiers in the Damascus suburb of Douma.

The Observatory reported similar clashes in Shfunia village near the capital with at least seven people killed, but did not say if they were soldiers or deserters. AFP

Putin ready for talks with protesters

MOSCOW—Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is ready for dialogue with the Russian protest movement to ensure that presidential polls are fair, his old ally said on Russia's number Alexei Kudrin said on Tuesday.

Kudrin told the Vedomosti daily there had been Putin—who has announced plans to swap jobs with President Dmitry Medvedev after the March 4 polls—on the eve of Saturday's mass rally in Moscow.

"From my conversation with Putin, I understand that he was not afraid of the March 4 elections. He is ready to take all the measures necessary to make sure these elections are fair," Kudrin told the business daily.

Kudrin addressed the protesters as the rally to urge polished reforms to the country's answer by the mass release survey economic policies for the last decade served as one of the pillars of Putin's domination of Russia.

He said he told Putin that "urgent dialogue was needed" with protesters made up of both apolitical middle class Russians and members of the more radical liberal and nationalist forces.

"This is what I told Vladimir Putin before coming to the rally. On the whole, I understand that this dialogue was possible," added Kudrin.

Some protesters ridiculed and jeered the respected economist as a member of the ruling class and he looked uncomfortable addressing the huge crowd.

But analysts said Kudrin's appointment was of great importance and he could become a mediator between the authorities and protesters.

"The proposals I made at the rally were made as my own personal initiative and addressed to both sides," Kudrin said. But he cautioned: "I do not have Putin's authority to conduct negotiations." AFP

Gunman in Santa suit kills 6 kin, self

GRAPEVINE, TEXAS—Police in a quiet Fort Worth suburb worked on Monday to piece together a family history after a man dressed in a Santa Claus suit apparently shot six relatives and himself on Christmas.

Grapevine police spokesperson Sgt. Robert Hoerling said the shooter drawed up to the Santa outfit shortly after midnight on Christmas Day and the family appeared to have been opening Christmas presents. Police responding to a 911 call found four women and three men dead, along with two handguns.

"We think he was just inside the door when he began firing with the rest of them and decided for whatever reason that's how he's going to end things," Hoerling told The Associated Press.

Investigators worked through Sunday night and into Monday morning, meticulously searching the apartment where the bodies were found, along with vehicles parked nearby. Police said they believe the victims were related, though some were visiting and didn't live in the apartment.

Hoerling said investigators are piecing together a "family history," but he declined to get into the specifics of the shooter and the victims were being done on Monday by the Tarrant County medical examiner, but it would probably be Tuesday before their identities were released, he said.

"We're getting a clearer picture, but we're not ready to go on the record with anything until we first see from the medical examiner absolute confirmation of identities and the manner of death," Hoerling said.

Roger Mercatti, a spokesperson for the medical examiner's office, said the victims have been tentatively identified, but the office couldn't confirm the names because the state driver's license fingerprint database wasn't available on the holiday.

"In addition, we need to locate next of kin before information can be released, and our investigators are working on that as well," Mercatti wrote in an email to the AP.

Late Sunday evening, police intently searched a sport utility vehicle parked outside the apartment. The vehicle is registered to a man who listed his residence as a house two miles away in the neighboring suburb of Colleyville.

Thomas Hrdlick, who lives near the house in Colleyville, told the AP he heard from neighbors that police went to the house on Sunday. He said it was his understanding that the man and woman who once lived there were estranged.

Records show the couple had financial problems and that their home, most recently valued on the county tax rolls at $196,200, had been sold in 2010 at a foreclosure auction.

Police and firefighters rushed to the Lincoln Vineyards complex about 11:30 a.m. on Sunday after receiving a 911 call in which one was to the other's end of the line. Because no one responded on the phone, police went into the apartment, located at the back of the complex.

Many of the nearby apartments are vacant, and police said no neighbors reported hearing anything on a quiet Christmas morning when many people were not around.

The apparent murder-suicide involved the first homicides in Grapevine in more than a year and a half. AP

US considering travel request from Yemen's president

HONOLULU—The US government is trying to decide whether to let Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh travel to the United States for medical treatments, White House spokesperson Arik Ehrnert said on Monday.

Saleh was injured in a June assassination attempt that forced him into a hospital in Saudi Arabia, and lawmakers pressure to his vice president has mounds after months of protests that brought the Gulf country to the brink of civil war.

Ehrnert declined to say when a decision on whether to allow Saleh into the United States would be made, and denied a New York Times report that the embattled Yemeni president's petition was accepted and he could arrive at New York Presbyterian Hospital as soon as the end of this month.

"US officials are continuing to consider President Saleh's request to enter the country for the sole purpose of seeking medical treatment, but initial reports that permission has already been granted are inaccurate," Ehrnert said in Hawaii, where President Barack Obama is vacationing.

Earlier on Monday, an Obama administration official said Saleh's office had contacted the US Embassy in Sanaa to say the Yemeni leader wanted to get specialized care in the United States to treat injuries sustained in the assassination attempt.

The attempt on Saleh's life came after he tried to dash the power-transfer accord brokered by Gulf Arab nations, sparking street battles that devastated parts of the capital.

Hundreds of people were killed during months of protests seeking Saleh's ouster. The political deadlock triggered economy-crushing conditions in power-less three years security in Syria.

Embattled world leaders often travel to politically neutral Switzerland for medical care. Reuters

SALEH

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Editor Raul G. Manalo ● Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

BUSINESS

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Ang in talks to secure controlling stake in PAL

Parties said to be close to sealing multibillion-peso deal

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE LUCIO Tan group of companies is hatching a deal to sell a controlling stake in flag carrier Philippine Airlines to a group led by San Miguel Corp. president Ramon S. Ang.

Industry sources said Ang's group and key representatives from the Tan family had a "meeting of minds" whereby the former would buy into Asia's oldest airline. The two parties were said to be in the thick of discussions before Christmas.

Another source familiar with the matter said Ang's group had presented a very good offer that was accepted "in principle" by the Tan group, but the value under consideration was not revealed.

Other sources said Tan was willing

ANG, B2

INDICATORS

PESO-DOLLAR RATE
(Dec. 27, 2011)
43.840

Stocks close lower

SHARES prices yesterday pulled back when some investors pocketed gains after a seven-day run-up.

The main-share Philippine Stock Exchange index shed 29.63 points, or 0.58 percent, to finish at 4,994.40, weighted down mostly by profit taking on holding firms.

STOCKS, B3

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Trans-Asia, Ayala venture to proceed with coal plant

South Luzon Thermal Energy secures needed ECC

By Amy R. Borres

SOUTH Luzon Thermal Energy Corp., the joint venture between Trans-Asia Oil and Energy Development Corp. and Ayala-led AC Energy Holdings Inc., is set to start construction of its 135 megawatt coal facility next year.

Trans-Asia president Francisco L. Viray confirmed plans to finally proceed with the construction of the power plant in Batangas after the company secured an environmental clearance certificate (ECC) for the facility.

The ECC certifies that a project has complied with government requirements and will not cause significant negative impact on the environment.

In November this year, South Luzon Thermal Energy signed a P9-billion project loan facility to fund the planned coal-fired power plant.

The loan facility was signed with lenders Banco De Oro Unibank Inc., Security Bank Corp. and Bank Government Banking Corp.

"The loan will be used to fund the construction of the project, which is expected to be operational by mid-2014," the two companies earlier said.

Trans-Asia said that the Sumitgat clean coal project is now undertaking with the Ayala Group would have significantly lower carbon emissions compared to other coal-fired plants.

It explained that clean coal technology relies on ultra-existing Stabilized fuel technology that leads to lower carbon, sulfur oxide and nitrogen oxide emissions.

The company estimates that emission rates of clean coal plants are 30 percent to 70 percent lower than those of conventional coal-fired power plants.

Trans-Asia earlier said that it wants all its assets in and mainly from the Consolidated Southern Coal Corp., which produces low-sulfur coal.

Apart from its planned coal plant in Batangas, Trans-Asia reported that it was also looking to put up a similar 135-MW facility in Mindanao to help shore up the generation capacity in the island.

Should the company proceed with the project, it expects the power plant to start operations by 2015.

JTH Davies buys into STI

By Doris C. Dumlao

BUSINESSMAN Dearlito Tanco has started infusing his education-related interests, including shares in STI Education Services Group Inc., into the more publicly listed holding firm JTH Davies Holdings Inc.

JTH Davies told the Philippine Stock Exchange that the purchase of 35 million shares of STI was "pursuant to the thrust of JTH to invest in schools and academic-related activities."

The holding firm also acquired new additional blocks of shares in STI, consisting of 27.6 million and 1.72 million shares.

Both JTH and STI are controlled by Tanco's group.

JTH shares fell by 3.39 percent to P1.56 yesterday. The last closing price give it a market capitalization of P93.4 million.

STI, founded in 1983, has over 100 college campuses around the country. It also has seven grade schools in Metro Manila and northern Luzon.

GMA 7, TV5 deny merger rumors

By Paolo G. Montecillo

RUMORS of an impending megadeal that would result in the merger of Manuel V. Pangilinan's TV5 and GMA 7 are false, with both sides denying any negotiations with each other.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, GMA Network Inc. denied the rumors, which first circulated in social networking sites Twitter and Facebook.com.

"We would like to inform the public that there is no truth to the said report," GMA Investor relations and compliance head Jet Chiu said.

Reports of the alleged deal described Pangilinan's offer to buy GMA 7 as "stand-boggling," which gave the company's three major stockholders would not refuse.

For his part, Ray C. Espinosa, president of TV5 operator Associated Broadcasting Corp. (ABC), said the rumored purchase price of P500 billion should have been a deal-grabber to the owner's lack of credibility.

If the rumor were true, buying GMA 7 for half a billion pesos would have been a 2,500-percent premium over the company's market capitalization of P20.03 billion, based on data of the local bourse.

The price would have also trailed GMA 7's almost-at-valuable as the Pangilinan group's crown jewel, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), which is worth about P543 billion.

PLDT makes over P40 billion in profits annually. GMA 7, meanwhile, made just P1 billion in 2010.

"That's why it's obviously false," Espinosa said in a text message to the business.

The Pangilinan group owns TV5 through MediaQuest Holdings, a subsidiary of the PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund.

The group is investing heavily in TV5 over the next few years to build up the station as a credible threat to the dominance of GMA 7 and Lopez-led ABS-CBN Corp., which have enjoyed a virtual duopoly in the industry in the last 10 years.

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Tatang's portfolio

BIZ BUZZ
by the staff

THE COUNTRY'S wealthiest man, Henry Sy Sr.—patriarch of the family that controls the SM group—recently "divested" most by P1.0 billion worth of shares in holding firm SM Investments Corp. based on an SMIC disclosure last week. By unloaded a total of 23.65 million shares from Dec. 16 to 20 at prices ranging from P526 to P550.

Is "Tatang" easing from frontline to major investments? Not really, as the shares haven't gone outside the group. Some market participants assumed the transfer of the big chunk of shares could be part of the octogenarian tycoon's estate planning to pass on the helm to the next generation.

A spokesperson of the SM group said the shares did remain within the group. "This is part of the regular restructuring of his stockholding," the spokesperson said. "There's no new policy."

Henry Sy now owns, alone 8.03 percent of SMIC shares to name directly under Sy's name. Doris C. Bumbac

Flying in a borrowed plane

WHAT should a rapper do when he wants to fly to Sagada in the Cordillera to help deliver relief goods and he finds that his private jet is undergoing its annual maintenance? Why, borrow from another airplane, of course.

According to our source, tycoon Lucio Tan recently flew to (DE) not to his crowding rush from Taiwan at no cost. Also in cooperation with Tan Pao Hee, the Asia-Pacific Chamber of Commerce will send three bulldings (Eastern Pacific as the "leading") with transport vans, along with 2,000 packages of relief goods comprised of noodles, rice and water.

And from whom did Kapatan borrow the Gulfstream? Let's just say the mystery friend also flies a Bombardier private jet. Dianne L. Lucas

Repatriation

IF you are a lot of Filipino expat bankers back to warm these days, they aren't here for the holidays. Because the lingering fears over the euro-zone and the US' fiscal cliff per many offshore financial executives in precarious situations, many are now considering domestic employment opportunities. As many European financial institutions are selling their assets to meet capital build-up requirements for 2012, the "de-leveraging" will inevitably result in the retrenchment of workers.

Fortunately for Pinoy financial executives who may lose their jobs in erstwhile greener pastures, many local institutions are more than happy to take them in their payrolls.

For instance, Bank of the Philippine Islands president Aurelio "Gigi" Montinola III is now said to be considering Filipino expats of all ages from Wall Street, Hong Kong and other financial centers seeking employment in the local bank. It's estimated that over more than 40 BPI executives with the rank of VP or higher are up for retirement, and the bank is looking for people to replace them.

It's good to be in the right part of the globe at this time. Doris C. Bumbac

Family feud

REMNOS of a prominent Metro Manila political family are currently at odds on whether to allow a major commercial property development to be undertaken in their city.

According to our source, Camp Sto. 1 is appealing the redistrict, which may or may not include a new hotel, casino and mall, for fear that it may compete with the camp's own business interests in the area. For everyone's information, this camp is involved in industries such as real estate, retail and, although they may deny this, road construction.

Publicly, the camp is citing supposed environmental factors in blocking the new commercial development, which may involve the reclamation of a substantial parcel of land near Manila Bay. In fact, the leader of this particular camp has spoken publicly against the project, warning that this may increase flooding in the city.

Unfortunately for him, the biggest supporters of the planned project are part of his own family. One can even argue that members of Camp Sto. 2 come from the more prestigious part of the family tree, while the head of the first camp was only "married into the clan."

Camp Sto. 2 is supporting the new commercial establishment, saying this will increase the overall residential city's income requirements. Of course, it probably helps, too, that this planned commercial establishment is backed by one of the country's most prominent businessmen.

If you have to ask which person, Metro Manila family this is, then you still never know. Paolo Montecillo

Revisiting Belle Grande

THE market was recently spooked by talks that the partnership terms between Belle Corp. and Leisure & Resorts World Corp. (LRC) on the upcoming Belle Grande Manila Bay casino project may be over handed. Yesterday, LR shares dropped by 2.33 percent to P9.25 a share. There was likewise rumors that LR could sell more for the project considering Pagcor's requirement for the group to put up 800 hotel rooms first before opening the casino.

Upon checking that with Belle, the correct is indeed being finalized although it doesn't sound too bad. "Their contract is being extended from 25 years to 35 years," Belle vice chair Willy Ocier told Biz Buzz. He assured people that there wouldn't be any other changes in the terms, such as to profit sharing. Under the terms, LR will get 35 percent of net casino winnings; or 50 percent of the gaming cash flow (as measured by earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, amortization and amortization), whichever is higher.

For those asked Ocier why shares of APC Group have been trading lately in the past few days. He said this must be because of APC's focus for 2012...geothermal, mining and mineral businesses. "There are no existing subsidiary's industries, only overseas wanting to have a piece of the action. Doris C. Bumbac

Got business news and a preview of the days the coming before it comes out first? DM JAQ ABOUT MESH or 440-7 (PLDT) or (DE)

Power Situation Outlook
for Wednesday, 28 December 2011

	Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao
Available Capacity (MW)	8,190	1,057	1,259
System Peak (MW)	6,254	1,013	1,283
Power Reserve (MW)	1,936	244	-8

Shut up and pay up, Sobrepeña firm told

CJHDevco continues to withhold lease payments, says BCDA

By Aby R. Rotea

HOW the Bases Conversion and Development Authority bluntly ordered Camp John Hay developers Corp. (CJHDevco) of the Jose Sobrepeña group to "shut up" and settle the P2.4 billion in unpaid rent for the Camp John Hay property in Baguio City.

BCDA yesterday issued the statement as it shrugged off demands made by CJHDevco to comply with certain provisions of their contract.

"There is no point threatening us with suspension of payments, since CJHDevco has not been paying us in the first place. (and) Time (is) (further), it is the CJHDevco that owes BCDA P2.4 billion, and counting. So it (CJHDevco) has to either put up or shut up," BCDA officials said in a release yesterday.

"If it CJHDevco that must comply with our ... demand letters for the settlement of its rental arrears that have been piling up over the past years," added BCDA president and CEO Arnel Paciano D. Casanova. "Instead of complying with our demands, CJHDevco maybe kept unaccounting the dead issues against the BCDA in a desperate attempt to evade paying its back rentals."

Casanova described CJHDevco as a "delinquent lessee, obviously throwing a smokescreen to conceal their public scrutiny its own unsettled financial obligations" arising from the lease contract on Camp John Hay in Baguio City.

CJHDevco has refused to pay the lease for the John Hay property since late 2008.

The original lease contract for the John Hay property was signed by the BCDA and CJHDevco in October 1996. It is for 25 years; three times, with the the last taking place in July 2008. In that extension, the Sobrepeña company was supposed to pay its outstanding debt of close to P2.7 billion, representing unpaid lease rentals and interest charges.

The total amount were reduced to just P2.4 billion following CJHDevco's payment of P100 million upon the signing of the revised memorandum of agreement, and P300.3 million worth of assets in a "dation en pago."

Ang in talks to secure controlling stake in PAL

From page B1

in bit a new investor come to be at least $1 billion, for that amount, the investor will gain controlling equity while shouldering part of re-flotting costs.

The sources said some preliminary paperwork had been drawn up last Friday in the presence of Harry Tan, the tycoon's brother. The next steps a due diligence audit to finalize the terms of the acquisition.

The Lucio Tan group's holding firm for the airline business, PAL Holdings Inc., surged by 57.78 percent to close at P9.37 a share at the local stock market yesterday. This puts the company's market capitalization at P16.61 billion.

It is not known whether the group will buy or deal will involve Ang in the technical capacity, or if the Miguel itself will eventually be part of the transaction. The airline business, however, is in line with the conglomerate's diversification thrust in infrastructure.

San Miguel is investing about P300 million in terminal and set up new tourism amenities at the Godofredo P. Ramos airport in Caticlan, the main gateway to Boracay Island, a top tourist draw.

The conglomerate has also expressed interest in public-private partnership airport contracts for Bulacan, Subic and Camiguin (Agusan).

Ang, himself a pilot, has been interested in acquiring PAL over the last few years. His business rival, Manuel Pacifico Tan, Ltd. executive director Manuel V. Pangilinan, was likewise looking at PAL and was earlier reported to be the front runner in the race to acquire PAL.

Pangilinan had earlier offered P700 million to take over the airline, industry sources said.

Pangilinan and Ang had also considered joining forces to invest in PAL, but that deal fell through.

Earlier, PAL secured Malacañang's approval to spin off its catering, ground handling and cargo services to new companies. The move is seen as a prelude for the airline to attract a new investor.

The spin-off plan is meant to address PAL's finances, which took a beating from the recent global financial crisis.

When asked about the deal being hatched, PAL president Jaime Bautista told the business that, as far as management was concerned, no one was aware of any plan to sell a controlling stake to the flag carrier.

And in any event, management was not included in the shareholders' discussions, Bautista said.

Also, Ang did not comment on the reported deal. But insider sources said he was overheard telling friends that the rumored acquisition would be "for the good of the country."

Other sources from the Lucio Tan group said the talques had long set several conditions for the entry of a new investor, including a probable ban on the prospective buyer to sell to another carrier.

Another tycoon, John Gokongwei Jr., controls rival airline Cebu Pacific.

Tan's group likewise sought several type of venues for its roster of young executives.

It was earlier reported that PAL would end the year in the red due to its labor woes and high fuel prices.

The strike by PAL Employees' Association (Palea) last September forced the airline to scale down flights for several weeks. PAL workers were protesting the company's plan to retrench 2,000 employees.

PAL booked a net loss of $33.4 million in the third quarter—a reversal from the profit of $27.6 million reported a year ago.

Stocks close lower

From page B1

Value turnover was heavy at P1.165 billion, including P9.8 billion worth of cross transactions. There was likewise a block sale on PLI at P1.02 a share worth a total of P7.14 million.

Foreign turnover were among those who forked up positive days' gains, resulting in P486 million in net foreign selling for the day. There were 89 advancers against 105 decliners, while 46 stocks were unchanged.

A local dealer said the market was just taking a break to gain momentum for a positive close for 2011. The index has so far risen by 361.42 points, or 5.8 percent, since the start of the year.

Among the index stocks that contributed to profit-taking were SM Investments, JGS, Globe, Metro Pacific Investments, PSEI, Meralco, BPI, Ayala Corp., PLDT and Bank of the Philippine Islands.

Doris C. Bumbac

ST. PETER LIFE PLAN, INC. FIRST PRE-NEED FIRM TO BE GRANTED ITS LICENSE FOR 2012

St. Peter Life Plan Inc. was the first Pre-Need Firm to be issued its Certificate of Registration and License to Sell as a Pre-Need Company in 2012 by the Insurance Commission. R. Peter Life Plan continues to be the only pre-need company and the only funeral service provider for the residents of the Greater Manila Area. (bottom L-R) CEO for Peter Life Plan Inc. Ramon C. Manalang and VP for Legal Affairs Carlos M. Valencia

TOPPING OFF CEREMONY

(L-R) Raul Bautista, Executive Vice President and Chief Development Corporation Officer; Jaime Ayala, Vice Chairman of Ayala Land Inc.; Lucio Co, Chairman of Fortune Holdings Corporation (FHC); Leonardo Dayao, President of FHC; Bong Gordon, Mayor of Olongapo City; Tony Aquino, President of Ayala Land Inc., Bobby Garcia, Chairman of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority; and Cesar Dizon, Vice President of Ayala Land Inc.

Vladimir Point, one of the newest retail developments of the Ayala Malls, marked a significant milestone with a topping off ceremony held on November 21, 2011. The symbolic rite declares the structural completion of the building, bringing it one step closer to opening the mall next year.

Leading the momentous occasion were Ayala Land, Inc. President Antonino Aquino, Malakh Development Corp. Executive Vice President Raul Bautista, Fortune Holdings Corp. Chairman Lucio Co, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Chairman Bobby Garcia, and Olongapo City Mayor Bong Gordon.

Vladimir Point is at the heart of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone and right across Olongapo City. It will have over 300 retail, food and entertainment outlets - a one-stop venue for everyday shopping, leisure, dining and entertainment, featuring top foreign and local retail brands.

MANIFESTO BY IBP NATIONAL PRESIDENTS

As former IBP National Presidents, we express our collective sense that the forthcoming impeachment trial of Chief Justice Renato Corona will be healthy for our democracy. As we await the unfolding high drama, let us not lose sight of some basic principles.

First: No one in the public service is a sacred cow. Everyone in government including high officials removable only by impeachment is ultimately answerable to the sovereign people from whom all governmental authority emanates.

Second: We should recognize the primacy of the rule of law and respect the doctrine of separation of powers. At the same time, we must realize and accept that the rule of law and the doctrine of separation of powers do not mean, nor require, that the Chief Justice be immune from criticism, or impeachment. As H.L. Mencken put it, the lowliest citizen has the divine right to criticize the highest judge.

Third. As Chief Justice, CJ Corona should be the first to strengthen the Supreme Court as an institution. He discharges this burden well when he shows judicial statesmanship and independence but abandons such duty when, by official actions he shows marked subservience to the person who appointed him Chief Justice. For the Supreme Court will be a credible court of last resort only if it is a court of moral force.

Fourth: The President, as leader and father of the nation, may and should speak in the strongest terms possible whenever the decisions of the Court or the official actuations of the Chief Justice no longer serve the best interest of the nation. After all, the welfare of the people is the highest law.

Neither can the House of Representatives be faulted. By impeaching Chief Justice Corona, it exercised its constitutional prerogative to initiate impeachment and placed the country on notice that the elected representatives of the people are holding the Chief Justice accountable for his actions as specified in the Articles of Impeachment even as the power to determine guilt or innocence devolves upon the Senate.

Let us come out of this experience a stronger and better nation.

RAOUL R. ANGANGCO
IBP National President (1995-1997)

JOSE AGUILA GRAPILON
IBP National President (1997-1999)

ARTHUR D. LIM
IBP National President (1999-2001)

TEOFILO S. PILANDO, JR.
IBP National President (2001-2003)

JOSE ANSELMO I. CADIZ
IBP National President (2003-2006)

APC units extend supply contract with Napocor

By Jerry E. Bueno

PUBLICLY listed AboitizPower Corp. said its two affiliates have signed an agreement to extend by another year its transition supply contract with state-run National Power Corp. (Napocor) and Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM).

This will allow Napocor to continue supplying electricity to Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) under a contract which was extended up to Dec. 26, 2012 or three months after the implementation of open access and retail competition, whichever comes first.

APC said its affiliates, Therma Luzon Inc. and Therma Visayas Inc., have signed the power supply contract with Napocor for up to 12 months starting Dec. 26, 2011. Therma Luzon and its renewable will deliver to Meralco 1,013.63 gigawatthours and 2,878.98 GWh of energy, respectively, a year.

The extension of the power supply contract between Napocor and Meralco will allow the government to continue providing discounted power rates to economically challenged customers.

The supply contract, which is being implemented under the Economic Stabilization (ESP), was supposed to have ended on Dec. 25 this year. The executive will thus ensure the stability of electricity prices charged by Meralco to its consumers.

According to PSALM, this decision addressed the request of the Philippine Electricity Market Corp. and the Sorsogon, Ilocos and Visayas Initiatives in the Philippines Inc. to retain the power rate discount in economic zones.

Gov't subsidy to 36 state firms jumped 177% to ₱45B in Jan.-Nov.

NHA was top recipient with P15.2B

By Raoul W. Dominguez

THE GOVERNMENT gave out P13.46 billion in subsidies to state-owned and -controlled corporations and similar entities in November, the bulk of which went to the National Housing Authority (NHA).

Data from the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr) show that the amount was 207 times the P267 million given out in the same month of 2010.

This brought the cumulative subsidies extended to 36 state firms in the 11 months to November to P45.2 billion or 177 percent more than the P16.32 billion a year ago.

The increase in the 11-month subsidy was observed as government spending finally exceeded programmed expenditure for November which is P198.7 billion. Actual spending during the month was P230.17 billion.

The top recipient during the 11 months was the NHA with P15.2 billion or a third of the total for the period.

According to the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, the government wants to serve at least 100,000 of the estimated 1.28 million households that need housing services in 2011.

In the first half of this year, the NHA covered 10,000 households through programs involving resettlement, slum upgrading, and acquisition and development of raw land.

The government estimates that from 2011 to 2016, some 3.773 million housing needs would be resulting from population increase.

For the same period, government agencies are aiming to provide direct housing services to 1.46 million households or just about a quarter of the demand.

The others in the top five recipients of subsidies from January to November were Land Bank of the Philippines, P7.83 billion; Philippine Health Insurance Corp. or PhilHealth, P6.62 billion; National Power Corp., P5.62 billion; and National Food Authority (NFA), P3.73 billion.

In November alone, NHA got some P12 billion or 96 percent of the total amount extended that month. It was also the payout of the total subsidies the NHA had received so far this year.

Other agencies that received subsidies were Philippine Postal Corp. with P165 million; Philippine Coconut Authority, P54 million; Philippine National Railways, P12.2 billion; and Philippine Sinter Corp., P46 million.

Last week, the BTr reported that state spending for January to November totalled P1.3 trillion or only 78.7 percent of the programmed P1.71 trillion for the entire year.

The new year: One giant magic slate

MONEY MATTERS
Efren Z. Cruz

QUESTION: How can I best keep my new year's financial resolutions in 2012? More specifically, I truly want to stay within my budget, significantly reduce my debt, get adequate life, non-life and health protection for me and my family, and invest for a better future. E-mail inquiry

Answer: Many resolutions are made at the start of the year, including those that have something to do with earning and saving more money. The problem is that financial resolutions, like, say, Filipinos rely on some unique practices like wearing polka dot clothes and displaying 12 round fruits on the dining table on New Year's Eve, with the round shape symbolizing money.

Bad news: history has shown that these practices do not work. Only those relying on such abilities and basic savings goals succeed in saving money.

What works is if you seize opportunities to create, grow and preserve money using strengthened positive beliefs about money as your foundation. For example, it is well-known that money itself is not bad. Rather, it is the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10) that is bad.

Strengthen this belief further by adding that money is never the target; it is just a tool to achieve your ultimate goals in life. Here are some other strengthened positive practices about money according to the cash, debt, risk and wealth management pillars of personal finances:

•Save and invest your money before you even use it. The way to do this is to sign an auto-debit arrangement against your payroll account with your bank. A good part of the amount debited is automatically transferred to an investment account. The balance is transferred to a passbook savings account to discourage you from making frequent cash withdrawals which you might easily do through an ATM.

•Rediscover expensive and cash-draining don't-need-items with cheaper have-to-have ones. Discover, for example, that a blender that incorporates ionization or ion generator changes. You will not have to shell out much additional cash just to ones you are able to save enough from the reduced consumption to liquidate the extra loan prior to the last payment date. Should you to say you also save on future insurance charges with full taxpayer payments.

•Get life insurance to protect your dependents but get only the amount of coverage that is appropriate to the lifestyle that you and your loved ones to enjoy when you are gone. Insurance coverage will make you pay more. Also, through your boss. Ask your life insurance agent to build an insurance product for you according to your basic investing needs and then slowly add the riders. This is the equivalent of telecommunications companies offering basic monthly plans plus add-ons of your choice.

•Create your own education and pension plans with the irrevocable assistance of a Registered Financial Planner (RFP). Then execute such plans either through directly investing in money market instruments, bonds and stocks, or by indirectly investing through pooled funds. Mutual funds, unit investment trust funds, variable unit linked insurance and pre-need plans are the pooled funds currently available in the country. While real estate investment trusts or REITs are now enabled by law, the country has yet to see the launch of the first REIT product. And do remember that to invest successfully indeed, it is not all about the money but also about the risk involved.

The New Year is an unrivaled tool for helping you achieve your goals in life. As a fund manager for quite a number of years, I have seen how the New Year acts as a magic slate that helps people in starting out year-to-date returns and making fund managers start again from square one.

The only choices are to build on the lessons from the previous year's shortcomings to increase returns and/or to level up to chase another stellar performance in the coming year.

In the same manner, fill your personal finance magic slate in the coming New Year this Dec. with the old unproductive beliefs about money and as with the new and better ones. Also, keep your eyes peeled for opportunities to invest or even re-investing, growing and preserving money.

But never, ever lose sight of your ultimate goals in life; money is just one of the tools to reach those goals.

If you want to start the New Year right financially, consult your friendly RFP and/or universal financial planner. Starting preparation like the Bullish training scheduled on Feb. 16, 2012. Visit www.rfp.ph for a list of RFPs in the country and call (632) 216-1165 for information on the Bullish personal finance training program.

Happy New Year!

EFREN Z. CRUZ is a registered financial planner, RFP, certified public accountant, financial planner, investment adviser and author. Questions about the article may be sent to EFREN@RFP.COM.PH. (Editor's note: Efren Cruz is also a columnist for the Inquirer.)

Dec. inflation may range from 4% to 4.9%

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas said inflation was likely to settle within the 4.4-5 percent range in December, which would give officials the room to cut interest rates when deemed necessary.

The central bank's inflation forecast for the month will bring the average this year to about 4.5 percent, which is within the official target of between 3 and 5 percent.

The projected rise in consumer prices is partly due to anemic growth in global demand, which slowed down the rise in the cost of imported goods. The cost of imports partly influences domestic inflation.

The lackluster performance of the global economy is largely influenced by the sluggish growth of the United States and the euro zone, both of which are struggling with huge debts.

Similarly, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the central bank was considering turning its key policy rates in the first quarter of 2012 to support growth in the economy and gently shield it from the ill effects of unfavorable developments offshore.

The key policy rates, which influence commercial interest rates, currently stand at 4.5 for overnight borrowing and 6.5 percent for overnight lending.

Lower interest rates help boost demand for bank loans, which support consumption and investments.

Reduced rates, which prop up demand, may result in higher inflation but Tetangco said the BSP had the flexibility to cut rates because the inflation outlook for the short term was favorable.

Should inflation rise as a result of lower interest rates, the increase in consumer prices is expected to remain within desired levels.

The BSP targets inflation to remain within the 3-5 percent range next year and in 2013.

"The outlook for inflation remains manageable as we continue to see within-target rates over the policy horizon," Tetangco said.

In the first three quarters of this year, inflation averaged at a mere 3.6 percent. Economic growth for the entire year was expected to fall below the 4.5 percent target. Last year, growth was at a three-decade high of 7.6 percent.

The slowdown this year is blamed on the global turmoil that led to reduced demand for products from the Philippines and other exporting countries.

Michelle V. Remo

M&As seen improving rural banking sector's growth prospects

By Michelle V. Remo

RURAL banks are upbeat about their growth prospects for 2012, expecting that consolidation in the industry will enhance their competitiveness against commercial banks that have been putting up branches in the countryside.

Industry players said the entry of entire commercial banks in rural areas had made competition for rural banks tougher.

Tight competition, limited capitalization and management problems have led to the closure of a number of rural banks over the past three years.

The industry, however, believes that the sector's consolidation through mergers will make rural banks more financially viable and will enable them to invest in more products and services for people in the countryside.

The Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines (RBAP) said it was supporting calls for industry consolidation, agreeing that it was a wise move to make members stable and able to deliver more products and services to the countryside.

"Consolidation will result in members banks being more equipped in providing microfinance services to farmers, fisherfolk and small enterprises, especially with the banks' continuing focus on the agri-agro sectors," RBAP president Orit Dimas said in a statement.

Regulators have been pushing for the consolidation of the rural banking sector to curb abuses in the sector after the bankruptcy of Legazpi-based rural bank.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas is urging stable and well-managed rural banks to acquire smaller industry players.

Weak domestic are acutely as those from government-owned Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. to shoulder expenses arising with shutdowns, such as deposit insurance.

To avoid serious closures in the future, the government is encouraging mergers and consolidation.

The government is implementing a program called Strengthening Program for Rural Banks (SPRB) to encourage mergers and consolidations. Under this, banks that will serve as white knights for their troubled peers will be given incentives, such as regulatory relief and loans that can be used in the acquisition.

The rural banking sector, composed of more than 600 banks, has an average capital adequacy ratio (CAR) of 19 percent, exceeding the minimum requirement of 10 percent.

Regulators said the satisfactory average was due to the good performance of many rural banks. They noted, however, that many members were suffering from limited financial capacity.

BSP officials expect that the incentives offered will encourage more rural bankers to pursue consolidation.

In response, the RBAP said the industry would continue supporting consolidation moves.

In the meantime, the rural banking sector is pushing for a law that will allow industry members to accept investments from foreigners. Rural bankers said foreign investments will help rural banks boost their capital and enable them to invest in more products, services and technology.

Social connectivity: the key to compelling mobile experiences

By Michael Yin
Contributor

THE WORLD is on the move—the spread of the Internet, the widespread development of infrastructure, the prevalence of mobile devices and the rise of the app economy have transformed a new state of the art: one close to mobile. People can now access

COMMENTARY

vast amounts of information in their hands, keeping them connected even when they are mobile.

The convergence point for the new age of technology is the mobile device, be it a feature phone, smartphone or wirelessly connected tablet.

The attraction of mobile devices is the very human desire to interact with other people. They want to stay connected to their friends and family through integrated mobile social networks and communities.

This need for connection will provide the "sticky" factor that mobile network operators (MNOs) and service providers are looking for.

Social gaming

Based on a study conducted by eMarketer, the social gaming industry will

reach billion a revenue in trend by next year. It is estimated that the mobile social gaming market will increase to about 22 million users by 2013. Social gaming, for one, is fast becoming a reason for users to connect online with friends on their mobile phone. According to Nielsen's "Social Media Report for Q3 2011," almost 40 percent of social networks users access social media sites from their mobile phone. Also, according to a research firm, the number of people who access social networks on smartphones and other mobile devices will surpass 1.7 billion worldwide by the end of 2016, expecting a triple growth from December in 2011.

The rise in mobile social networking gives MNOs the opportunity to expand their revenue streams with enhanced mobile service offerings and ultimately, increase their profitability and strengthen their customer loyalty.

Operators who do not notice this trend run the risk of not being able to cope with the increased demand, or even worse, not having the right offerings on hand to meet consumers' needs. Using the right technology platform, MNOs can set themselves up for ongoing success and profitability.

The main challenge for MNOs will be to stay at the forefront of innovation, while maintaining profitability. Building a page from the growth of the mobile Internet, which is expected to experience double-digit (annual) usage by 2014, MNOs must capitalize on the human factor as the one thing that always keeps people coming back. Being able to stay in touch with and connect to one's friends and family is a very compelling and very basic need.

MNOs stand to benefit from making this connection as effortless as possible, by developing their own localized mobile social platform. This allows clear brand identification, service customization according to consumers' needs, deployment of the latest games and applications, as well as creating a stable community.

Unifying services

For instance, an operator who had built successfully launched its services in the Middle East required a platform to unify popular social networking services for its subscriber base in a country with a population of 1.5 million. Since it was new, it had to prove to the market that it was an credible and dependable an innovative and also promised to deliver excellent service to its customers.

The operator launched Mozat's mobile social platform and through this technology, the telco operator was able to offer a unified platform for communications and gaming. Within six months, the operator saw an increase in usage rate, reporting an average active time of four hours per day on the system. Users also increased, sending more messages and competing with friends on games, generating increased revenue for the operator.

Next wave

Telco operators need to be prepared to ride the next wave of mobile service offerings. Finding and identifying the right elements to attract and retain customers is key, and MNOs that offer seamless communications services as all platforms and the first to access the critical mass of subscriptions to mobile services will succeed. Creating localized mobile social platforms will be the next wave for MNOs. In order to build a loyal, sticky mobile community that remains engaged through seamless communications, mobile gaming and social sharing.

(The author is chief executive officer of Mozat Pte Ltd.)

MOTORING

Editor Joey N. Arcanes

Year-end outtakes and new info

LOOKING BACK at the year that is about to end, I remember narrating some things from two columns last month due to lack of space. Here are the outtakes and some info gained after those columns and an earlier one in August were published:

Jeep Grand Cherokee and Ford Explorer: A Comparo (Nov. 16, 28111). Regarding the two SUVs and their all-wheel-drive systems, I wrote that both are lifestyle vehicles incapable of serious, hard-core off-road adventures. However, the 2011 Jeep Grand Cherokee's Quadra-Trac II (I-S AWD) system with torque-on-demand two-speed transfer case and Electronic Limited Slip Differential in the rear axle makes it much more capable than the 2011 Explorer in tackling severe off-road and towing situations. In Wall Street Journal's motoring columnist Dan Neil noted, "The Explorer's **architect Jeep Grand Cherokee** utterly crushes the Ford off road." Perhaps this is why the Jeep Grand Cherokee 3.6L Limited costs P3,688,000 while the Ford Explorer Limited costs P1,380,000 less at P2.3 million!

Peerless Pajero for 2012 (Nov. 09, 28111). In the US Pajero section, I wrote that Honda Cars Philippines, Inc. is expected to unveil the long-awaited 2012 Civic that will be launched at the New York International Auto Show last April, but in Philippine arrival now past could be delayed since Honda Motor Co. is working to improve and redesign it by launching late in 2012 in the United States as the 2013 version. Per an article in The WSJ, the newest Civic was met with disappointing reviews and was excluded for the first time from Consumer Reports' closely watched Recommended list. The Civic has been criticized for having too many hard plastic parts in its interior, for ride and handling characteristics that fall short of other versions of the car and for retaining a five-speed automatic transmission while its rivals in the compact car segment like the Ford Focus, Chevrolet Cruze and Hyundai Elantra have six speeds, in a dealers' conference in Las Vegas, the president of American Honda acknowledged that Honda had erred with the Civic and had underestimated the models its competitors were developing. "We produced a good car when we should have produced a great car," he was quoted by The WSJ as saying.

Asia Design World's No. 1. In the same section, I wondered whether the 2012 Toyota Camry will be launched here next year and noted that Toyota's plant in Thailand was also flooded and had been temporarily closed. Now comes the news that damage to suppliers from Thailand's floods in Detroit had forced Toyota to scale back production anew just as it was recovering from the recall of more than 10 million vehicles globally in 2009-2010 plus the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan's northeast coastline. The setbacks have eroded Toyota's position against global rivals including General Motors, Hyundai-Kia Motors and Volkswagen AG. The production disrupted by the Thai floods has recently returned to normal and Toyota recently forecast a 20-percent jump in global sales to a record 8.48 million vehicles in 2012.

Adjusted numbers: Toyota remains No. 1 in sales in the PH, a decline in global sales due to production shortfalls and a consequent 34 percent drop in profit to 186 billion yen ($2.3 billion) in the fiscal year ending in March 2011) could put Toyota behind General Motors, which it had overtaken as the world's biggest automaker in 2008, and behind Volkswagen. While Toyota still produces more cars than any of its main rivals, its lower profit projections could place it behind Nissan, which forecast a net profit of 290 billion yen this year and Hyundai, which could earn more than $6 billion this year.

When Supply Cannot Meet Demand (Aug. 24, 28111). This column noted how the supply chain disruption caused by the March 11 twin disasters in Japan reduced the output of Toyota and Honda worldwide. Then, it appeared that the strengthening of the yen versus the U.S. dollar and euro is inflicting a bigger twin impact on major Japanese automakers than the natural disasters. The yen has strengthened by nearly six percent in the last four years, its exchange rates before 911 yen to the dollar was 77.84 (six months this month), the gains compel investors of Japanese exports in overseas markets to reduce and erodes the value of foreign profits on the balance sheets of Japan's corporations.

To combat a strengthening yen that threatens the viability of its exports around the world, Honda Motor Co. plans to increase production capacity by as much as 40 percent in North America, its most important market, in order to export between 200,000 and 300,000 vehicles a year elsewhere while eventually reducing its exports of the vehicles to make up to Japan to between 30 and 40 percent over the next decade. Honda plans to build a new plant in Mexico and expand its seven existing assembly plants.

The strategy yen makes it hard to make money on small cars because profit margins are already thin. Honda recently began to ship its subcompact cars (a.k.a. the Jazz) from China to Canada to reduce the number of Fits it exports from Japan for the last five years. Honda has been exporting the Fit from China to 27 countries, mostly in Europe. Honda has also reduced production of the CR-V in Japan and increased its assembly in North America.

Nissan Motor Co. is also moving more manufacturing plants overseas to shield itself from the yen's appreciation. While Nissan maintains a production volume of one million vehicles a year in Japan, the country's second largest auto manufacturer led the way in moving production out of Japan and using more foreign-made parts at domestic plants. Last year, Nissan began importing all of its March subcompacts sold in Japan from Thailand. Over the next two years, Nissan plans to shift production of the Rogue crossover and Infiniti JX SUV to the U.S.

Toyota, on the other hand, is sticking to its pledge to build at least three million cars a year in Japan, half for export. This is the company's social responsibility commitment to protect Japanese jobs and Japan's industrial base. Vowing to roam advancing technologies and skills owned by its home factories and suppliers, Toyota is not about to be caught as an inflexible sweeper. Toyota expects to ride out slow sales and the yen's strength as it did in the mid-1990s. Toyota is streamlining its domestic production lines instead of upscaling them so that when the yen returns to a more balanced level, the company will be tremendously competitive.

Still, Toyota is losing $5 billion a year in its home market while the strong yen has reduced profits on exports. It recently began making the Corolla for a plant in Mississippi and is **establishing an expansion of its** Iwaki, Miyagi plant to make a new small car to replace the Yaris subcompact, which is currently made in Japan. And in the 2012 New Beetle's **message**, Toyota president Akio Toyoda, grandson of the late company's founder, warned that while he does not want to abandon the foundations of monozukuri by relocating production facilities elsewhere, if the company is simply unable to make a profit, it may be forced to do so.

ON THE ROAD

Aisle Sevilla-Mendoza

Toyota girds for big comeback in 2012

TOKYO – TOYOTA is aiming for a comeback, targeting record global sales of 8.48 million vehicles in 2012 and an even bigger number in 2013, after being battered this year by the March disaster in Japan and flooding in Thailand.

Toyota Motor Corp., Japan's top automaker, relinquished its title as the world's biggest in global vehicle sales for the first half of this year, ceding to No. 2 behind U.S. rival General Motors Co. and Volkswagen AG of Germany.

Toyota's global vehicle sales for this year totaled 7.8 million vehicles, including group companies, down 6 percent from the previous year, it said in a statement Thursday.

General Motors Co. spokesman Jim Cain said it will release its full-year global sales totals in January.

The Taiwan-based automaker had been at the top for more than seven decades until Toyota took the crown in 2008.

After the first three quarters, GM sold 6.708 million vehicles worldwide, according to its filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. If fourth-quarter results are consistent with prior months, it will sell just more than 9 million vehicles in 2011. Last year, GM sold 8.59 million vehicles around the world.

Volkswagen also has yet to issued its 2011 tally but said earlier this month it delivered 7.31 million vehicles globally during the January-November period.

Toyota's targets for 2012 and 2013 do not include group companies such as Daihatsu Motor Co. and Hino Motors, and so aren't directly comparable with numbers from GM and Volkswagen.

On Monday, Toyota unveiled the new compact hybrid car "Aqua," equipped with a 1.5-liter gasoline engine and an electric motor to drive the five-seater body. The world's highest efficiency vehicle, which achieved 35.4 km/liter for fuel efficiency, started to sell in Tokyo.

Toyota said its sales target for calendar 2012 is based on achieving 20 percent growth from its global sales this year and would be a record high for the company, underlining its turnaround ambitions.

The automaker's current sales record of 8.43 million vehicles was set also in 2007.

"It won't be a surprise to me if Toyota reaches a new record in global sales," said Shunsuke Kondo, auto analyst at Tokai Tokyo Research, stylish remain popular in Japan, the Camry sedan is doing well in the U.S. and demand is robust in emerging markets, he said.

Toyota's global sales ramped up for sales declines in North America and Japan with automakers in relatively new but booming markets such as China and India.

The manufacturer of the Prius hybrid and Lexus luxury models said it plans to sell 8.90 million vehicles around the world in 2013, not including group companies.

Toyota said it had not yet figured out forecasts for the group compact cars, it is possible the target might exceed 9 million. vehicles, had they been included.

Targeted overseas sales of 6.395 million vehicles this year, up 16 percent year-on-year, would take the new record for Toyota, it estimated.

Toyota acknowledged many uncertainties, which could push the numbers in either direction. One possible plus is the end of Japanese government incentives for green vehicles, according to Toyota.

Toyota, with its strong hybrid lineup, has been a major beneficiary of such incentives.

Still, Toyota has gone through some hard times lately.

The global financial crisis in 2008 sent behind a serious sales plunge in the key North American market.

Then came massive recalls, mostly in the US, that tarnished Toyota's once-pristine reputation for quality and speed. Sales declines in North America and Japan with automakers in relatively new but booming markets such as China and India.

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AP

CHEVROLET ORLANDO

Compact MPV for business and family

CHEVROLET PHILIPPINES recently launched the new Chevrolet Orlando—a vehicle with the sensibilities of an SUV, the convenience and of a crossover and the three-row, seven-passenger capacity of a multi-purpose vehicle.

The Orlando are only brings great value for money to models families on the move, but also brings something fresh to the local market. The product comes, Orlando, a crossover style family-oriented character of the vehicle by creating a connection to a popular family destination in the US state of Florida.

All the little details that go into making each Chevrolet special are found in this vehicle. A peek under the hood showcases a 1.8L DOHC 16-VTEC DOVVT engine that is of course designed to deliver great performance and efficiency. The Orlando is capable of producing a maximum of 141 hp @ 6200 rpm of power and 176 Nm @ 3800 rpm of torque. The Orlando also has a 6-speed automatic transmission with Autoshift Manual that provides better shifting control and gas mileage.

The Orlando spares no detail in providing safety and security features. Six families with small children, the Orlando has the Child Isofix restraint system, child-proof locks in the front and rear Anti-Theft Steering Indicator in place as a measure that safety comes first even before your drive has even begun. And while on the road, features like the Active Body Braking System (ABS) and Electronic Stability Control (ESC) that help give a worry-free journey.

The Orlando is equipped with driver, passenger side airbags and Crash Sensor Technology that automatically cuts off the driver and passenger in case of vehicle collision.

This 7-seater of comfort and interior flexibility been a striking crossover design. Its smooth and elongated with a split rear window for safety of the rear, Manual front Liftgate, sideturn signal lamps, power fold side mirrors, front and rear fog lamps, and 17" aluminum wheels to ease up considerably incredible ride.

Drivers are very excited with the entry of the Chevrolet Orlando in our vehicle line-up. With its sleek design and advanced features, we believe the Orlando is in a class of its own as it stands apart from the regular SUVs," said Rey Abad, Chevrolet Philippines Head.

"The vehicle is designed to provide practicality, comfort and convenience not only to the driver but to its passengers as well. It is evidence that form and function can co-exist. There is no other model in the market that can claim that it has the functionality of an MPV, the design style and comfort of an SUV and the POV with the price of an AUV."

The Orlando is set to be sold at a standard retail price of P1,188,000.

Unsung heroes

SKID MARKS

Joselyn Sanchez

SO CHRISTMAS is Merry Manila sweet stuff, so bright ways and bowers, not to mention the shopping centers and business districts turning into ghost towns, deserted and empty of cars, people and merriment. I was thankful as I was delivering gifts to friends and relatives because I was glad that Metro Manila had been spared of the chaos that befell our brothers in Mindanao, and as I write this, are here friends and colleagues currently helping in relief operations down south.

Reflecting on all these things while enjoying a leisurely drive, I came to realize that on Christmas Day, there were also unsung heroes around me. These are the people who worked overtime to keep our lives as normal as possible on such an important holiday and a time for rest for most of us. I'd like to use this space to thank these people, often unappreciated, who serve at our pleasure, keeping things convenient, hassle-free and orderly.

As I approached Cubao from EDSA northbound, the Araneta Center area was traffic, itself being the only saving grace that weekend so as to hours going to the various southern provinces and last-minute shoppers to the wet market flocked in Cubao to quickly get home or finish last-minute shopping. I saw a good number of MMDA traffic enforcers working, but there were also some semblance of order, shepherding PUVs and private cars alike to their proper lanes, urging drivers to push closely to line up the other lanes and keep traffic moving as quickly as possible. On the 24th in the afternoon, they were of course helping what they should be doing, directing traffic. Normally they earn our scorn for sometimes doing weird, illogical, irrational things but this particular weekend, I was glad they were at work, and I salute them for working extra hours to help ease the traffic calamity. Coming into Alfaro Greenhills, the San Juan Police was in full force, patrolling the streets and here they were, running up checkpoints to keep things in order.

On the 25th, I went over to my sister-in-law's for the party at Antipolo, and I was surprised to find convenience stores open, with the same clerks celebrating Christmas Day with their families inside the store. Medicine Life has placed convenience as the forefront of everything they we do. Most of our cars are restaurants, equipped with GPS/SATNAV to help us find our destinations, and packed with other features that help things easy for us, in the same way convenience stores have popped up in every corner to make buying basic necessities equally convenient. Imagine the daily stress we face in our local convenience store only to find it closed? A nightmare if you ask me. Hence I salute these people who found a way, albeit inconvenienced and probably quite difficult, to spend Christmas with their families and still be there to provide us with good service, the laughter of their children in the background and keeping them smiling at work when we all know they would rather be at home, eating or just celebrating with their loved ones.

And right before I got home to write this column, I realized I had to get up so as to avoid rushing for work the next day. But I was half expecting the gas stations to be closed especially as it was close to midnight, causing fears another disaster with Fukushima. Quite surprisingly, the major gas stations were all open, and while it took a while for an attendant to pump but was my result, hey, for next time I with what to me looked like two goddesses operating their stations. We all know that power is the weakest link in our system, it's all mainstream, stuck in time, unable to live freely.

There are more people out there who stayed at work to keep our lives running normally on one of the biggest holidays. We should be thankful to them and they allow our lives to be the way we've come to expect it, the way we want it. Thank you to all the MMDA traffic enforcers, all the police and other civil servants who were working this Christmas weekend, all the gas boys who were pumping fuel into cars that were taking long journeys, the fuck down canteens, many likely loved ones, and to the convenience store workers who made sure we had food and drinks to buy for our parties. It's a tough, thankless job, but thank God you're doing it. Happy holidays!

Shell partners with DOE to promote energy efficiency

IN CELEBRATION of National Energy Consciousness Month, Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation (Shell), together with Ford Philippines, joined the Department of Energy (DOE) in its campaign for energy conservation through a fuel efficiency training for the employees of DOE and its attached agencies.

Shell is passionate about helping drivers learn how to save fuel in their everyday lives, which is in line with DOE's campaign entitled "Right Now! Do Right, Be Bright!" that pushes for lifestyle change as a key component towards conservation in the public's day-to-day energy consumption.

"We are constantly working to find ways to reach out and inform Filipino motorists on how to save fuel and use their driving tools. Through this successful partnership with the Department of Energy and our participation in their National Energy Consciousness Month celebration, we were able to educate and help more motorists to get the most out of every drop of fuel they purchase," said Roberto Ramos, Shell vice president for communications.

The fuel efficiency training session was staged at the DOE compound in Bonifacio Global City where employees of DOE and its attached agencies were engaged in a friendly game to learn how to save fuel and cut their driving costs "through this successful partnership with the Department of Energy and our participation in their National Energy Consciousness Month celebration, we were able to educate and help more motorists to get the most out of every drop of fuel they purchase."

The training session was followed by the Amazing Race: Energy Family Challenge, wherein six teams of two members took on the challenge of driving a Ford Fiesta 1.5L A/T Ajoor Snowblack fueled by Shell FuelSave Unleaded around the DOE compound.

Aside from the Amazing Race, Shell also brought in the Shell FuelSave fuelsaver, wherein participant were able to put their fuel efficiency to the test virtually. Special prizes were given away for the most fuel-efficient drivers of the day.

Shell's participation in this month-long celebration follows the recent launch of Shell FuelSave Unleaded and Shell FuelSave Diesel in the Philippines. Shell's most advanced fuel economy products to date designed to help motorists save up to one liter per tank from the very first drop.

Since 2009, Shell has directly trained more than 200,000 people across the globe in fuel efficiency through face-to-face trainings, driving simulators, online materials and I Live Driving challenges to see how far people can go on a single liter of Shell FuelSave.

Hall Aeon, Pedro Scientist of Shell Global Solutions, conducts a fuel efficiency training session at the DOE compound.

DOE Undersecretary Jeanne Sarmiento Maxiong Mapandi rides the test vehicle as Pilipinas Shell executives Rene Rivo (right) and Mich Cruz-Villaluz flash the thumbs up sign.

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Republic of the Philippines

ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE LOAN PROJECTS OF ISABELA I RURAL ELECTRIC SERVICE COOPERATIVE, INC. (ISORECO I) FOR THE CY 2011 TO 2014 WITH PRAYER FOR THE ISSUANCE OF A PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ERC CASE NO. 2011-146 RC

ISABELA I RURAL ELECTRIC SERVICE COOPERATIVE, INC. (ISORECO I),

Applicant.

x - - -

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Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT (DSWD)
Constrorffice, Batasan Pambansa Complex, Quezon City

Request for Expression of Interest

BASELINE STUDY SPECIALIST

The Livelihood for Vulnerable Urban Communities (LVUC) Project of the DSWD received assistance grant from the Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF) to help improve employment and livelihood opportunities for approximately 2,750 households in 10 targeted poor urban communities.

Part of the grant shall be used to hire a Baseline Study Specialist who will design and conduct a qualitative baseline survey/study of the pilot communities and 5 control sites of LVUC Cls in the downtime of the project. The baseline survey/study shall collect information on (a) current household consumption, (b) level of household vulnerability to external shocks, (c) current rate of investment (cash, services and (d) an understanding of community dynamics and local stakeholder engagement in the community development planning processes.

The baseline study will heavily employ a variety of data collection tools such as small household surveys, direct observation, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and personal narratives, as deemed appropriate and has to be approved by DSWD. The study will be conducted from level 1 (community level) down to community members, (2) barangay-level with officials and staff; (3) city/municipal level with local government officials.

The Baseline Study Specialist shall have a minimum seven (7) years experience in managing social development research teams, have engaged in at least three baseline studies; and must be able to assemble a research team composed of (1) a team leader and two (2) research specialists. The Team Leader must have a degree in Sociology, Sociological Anthropology, or any Social Science courses and at least five (5) years of experience in conducting baseline studies. The research assistants must have a background in Sociology, Sociological Anthropology, or any Social Science courses and at least one (1) year experience in conducting baseline studies.

The Baseline Study Terms of Reference can be requested from the KALAHI-CIDSS Administrative unit at e-mail address (napolo.kc@dswd.gov.ph). Interested and qualified applicants may submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) and comprehensive Curriculum Vitae specifying education, work experience and list of previous social research engagements, along with the CVs of the Team Leader and research assistants at the DSWD Central Office, Bids and Awards Committee, 4th Floor Constitution Hills, Batasan Complex, Quezon City. Deadline of submission of EOI and required documents is on January 03, 2012.

(PN-Secretariat III, 2012)

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Regional Office No. V
Legazpi City

NOTICE OF SUSPENSION

Please be informed that the posted of **PUBLIC BIDDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF FOR SOLAR-BASED CAPACITY PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) SYSTEM AND SOLAR DRYING SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AT BARANGAY BANAY-LUBONGAN, CAMARINES SUR** as published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer on December 23, 2011, and posted in PHILGEPS and NFA websites is hereby **SUSPENDED** until further notice.

(Sgd.) **ERNESTO V. GARCERA**
Asst. Regional Director
NFAC Chairman

(PN-Secretariat III, 2012)

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OBITUARIES

(Don't worry Dad, what we had up it had us, we will see I love you and we'll remember you always will love.

Reynaldo M. Marcelo

July 13, 1949 – December 24, 2011

We bring with Mary's daughter Michelle & Lubin, sons-in-law Jovie & Ruth, grandchildren Jordan, Joshua, Jonah & Jada, brothers, sisters, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, nephews & nieces request the prayer readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Imperial Classic of La Fuerza Pte. subd. Amanda Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on Friday, December 30, 2011. Further details will be announced later.

"Even when I walk through a dark valley, I feel no harm. For you are at my side, your rod and staff give me courage..." Psalm 23:4

Our Dearly Beloved
Ariel San Buenaventura

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"Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because she has known My name. She will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue her and honor her. With a long life I will satisfy her And let her see My salvation."

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

Carolina "ARLING" Lapus Gozon

who peacefully returned to our Lord on December 23, 2011 and who is now with Him

wish to express our heartfelt gratitude and sincerest appreciation to all who offered masses and prayers, sent flowers and messages of sympathy in countless ways.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4

Globe is now growing close to 30 million subscribers.
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Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan

LIFESTYLE Home & Entertaining

Completing Erap's penthouse, discovering anti-aging berries

More milestones and personalities that made 2011

By Marge C. Enriquez
Contributor

JAIME GALVEZ Tan, M. MPH, proponent of natural medicine

The top three things I will remember 2011 for:

1. The launch of our Sweetyveli supplements. We have been monitored by godfatherly Jesse dar Himalayan, strawberry from the US and the seaberry of Brazil. Filipinos have yet to discover the Ngasog, camilis, dabai, lipote and many more. They are the best antioxidants in the world as they are anti-aging, anti-cancer. It's time that we become proud of our indigenous berries.

2. The propagation of native Philippine trees. Foreign trees such as the mindiptera, mahogany and gmelina have dominated our landscape. Quisumbing and Benas Boulevard are lined with mahogany trees, whose leaves are acidic. You will not find grass or plants growing well there. In Bohol, they cut the apitong, narra and kamagong whose leaves are eaten by the tarsier. Note the tarsier has an iconic head. People are blaming poaching for the impairing extinction. In reality, they have an acute food because they feed on native trees.

Meanwhile, the Heritage Filipinas Foundation and the Jaz Bela Alumni Foundation launched a native tree-planting program in memory of Leonard Co, our pioneer botanist who identified medicinal plants. He was killed in Jaipur. We met with Secretary Alfredo Lim and Herbert Bautista in planting native trees in Manila and Quezon City. We hope to meet Mayor Junjun Binay so we can plant carmen in Carmen Street, a bagalan on Bagalan Street and gubi on Gubi Street. Binay streets are named after native trees in Makati, but nobody knows what they look like.

3. Philippines breaks records. Despite being rejected by the Philippine Olympic Committee, the Philippine team won the gold medal in the International Dragon Boat Race in Florida. They set a new world record (4:57 .13) for the event.

Top three people I will remember 2011 for:

1. Manny Pangilinan. I was with him in Sarangani. He wants to promote seaflower in his province. In my meetings with him, I was impressed that he has remained humble.

2. Gina Lopez. I work in EPAGEA and I've seen how the Pico Sandatan sisters has heightened up. She also promoted for the watershed protection of the watersheds and said no to mining in Palawan.

3. Jesus Cuaresma. I've known him for decades, when he was dean of the UE College of Medicine. Way ahead of the times, he introduced traditional and alternative medicine in UE before UE my alma mater. I've been on his plane in Corregidor. It's a fusion of Filipino heritage, art, music and native trees. He epitomizes the art and science of medicine and wellness. Beyond the physical, there is attention to the spiritual, environmental and mental. I'd like to see a wellness community or a public space where you can feel well, go to the forest, dance and listen to the music, meditate, and enjoy good company.

Chito Antonio, architect

The top three things I will remember 2011 for:

1. Project completion. The completion of Senior President Joseph Estrada's penthouse and roof deck garden from the 27th to the 29th floor in Forest Suite, the building named after his parents.

Welcoming the New Year

with fashionable frocks

Robinsons Department Store showcases its holiday collection, perfect in welcoming 2013 with a bang!

THE HOLIDAY Child

SEASON'S Brightest!

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post Holiday SALEbration
December 26 to 31

Completing Erap's penthouse, discovering anti-aging berries

From page D1

2. Project debs. The construction of Sen. Jinggoy Estrada's house in metro south was postponed due to the death of his brother, Rampie. According to the Chinese, it's bad feng shui.

3. Frequent visits to Thailand for the production of my products for Rustan's. Bangkok is still very safe despite the rumblings in five-star hotels and the luxury department stores, so that flood won't get in. The worst is outside of the city. Because of the woes of the floods, people are afraid to visit the place. Hotels have been offering promotions. I was there for the King's birthday. He's very kind and was in the hospital. I've always loved the King- he's loved by the people.

The top three people I will remember 2011 for:

1. Architect Ramon Irlandez. My brother and I haven't had a picture taken together in so long since '90s were photographed at the Tinker Bell.

2. My clients. Dr. Ignacio and Shirley Lim who gave me the freedom to work on their Modern Asian home in Quezon City.

3. Nedy Tantoco. She gave me the opportunity to work on Rustan's in the home department and to give our Very Own a big boost.

Dondi Tuason, style maven

CHITO Asensio

DODDY Tuason

JAIME Galvez Tan

The top three things I will remember 2011 for:

1. Spending more time abroad. I was hardly home this year. The travels were a combination of business and personal trips to my children, who are studying abroad. It's been wonderful to be removed from the daily routine here. I began to notice the things that I took for granted such as the greenery. On cue, I enjoyed the changes of the seasons, from the freezing cold to 300 degrees of desert heat. In those times, I had meditations. My biggest lesson was that what you invest in other people is the real story of your life. It's not about how much you've amassed or how well you dress, but the time you've spent with the people who matter to you.

2. Seeing the posters in Hollywood and Rodeo Drive. The people in L.A. are different from those in New York. In fantasy, you'll see 50 people holding dogs like Paris Hilton, crawling their underbelly.

3. Discovering the Vietnamese who dominate the nail salons. From stories to studies, I have encountered many manicurists from Vietnam. You made memorable—flaming hot commercials—doll me nails, and were quite good. In the Gold Coast, the nail manicurist talked to me about his wife and interest. In Las Vegas, this male manicurist said he had four kids and his wife, also a manicurist, worked in another city.

The top three people I will remember 2011 for:

1. Edward Hollowell. This celebrity psychiatrist appears on television and has various national best sellers. I was struck by how successful people like him have remained humble; they see an difference from the posers. When you meet him, he makes you feel as if you're the most important person in the universe. Real people, no matter how accomplished they are, still stay in touch with their true selves. They don't have egos. That's one of the reasons they're so successful.

2. Michael Spence. A Boston-based educational counselor with great insight... anyone seeking advice on schools for their kids, he is the man. He was recommended to me by a friend whose family has worked with Michael many times.

3. My cousin Jeanne withheld. He died. On year of anniversary at 75. Although he was always surrounded by people, he was very lonely. He was into his own world, and nothing that he drove people away. I don't want to be like that.

'Disney on Ice' in Araneta, until Jan. 3

"DISNEY On Ice: Let's Celebrate!" features over 50 Disney characters dancing and skating on a huge ice rink, from classics like Cinderella, Snow White, and Beauty and the Beast to today's favorites such as Lilo, Stitch, Woody and Buzz Lightyear.

Completing the cast are all-time favorites Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Daisy and Goofy. With this ensemble, every member of the family is sure to see, remember and relive a hand-loved Disney show or movie.

It runs until Jan. 3 at the Smart-Araneta Coliseum, Cubao, QC.

Families may avail of a special package until today, and get one box (upper 8 or GA ticket with a purchase of four Upper 8 or GA tickets. Tickets are available at any TicketNet outlet; call 8115555.

New Year offerings at Eastwood Richmonde

Be right smack where the party is and check in one of Eastwood Richmonde's plush rooms with its New Year's Eve Room Packages, which include two tickets to the New Year's Eve Countdown Party and buffet breakfast for two persons and two children five years old and below. Rates start at P8,410 net. Begin the night with a New Year's Eve Dinner Buffet at Eastwood Café, where you can delight in appetizers, assorted breads, cheeses, soups, cold cuts, sushis, salads and Spanish tapas; entrees; preparations of Japanese tempura, Mediterranean stewsarma and boulevard, a variety of pasta dishes, and Mongolian BBQ cooked to your liking; enjoy the carving station selections of roasted suckling pig and roast prime rib; and end the memorable meal proper at P1,680 net with a collection of tempting desserts.

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day Lunch Buffets are also available at only P1,180 net. New Year's Day Dinner Buffet is also priced at P1,580 net.

Then at 8:30 p.m., join the New Year's Eve Countdown Party at The Gallery with the vibrant energy from the groovy tracks of the '70s and '80s by the Big Band Band. Get your appetite ready for a ten-course buffet spread that will keep you thrilled till midnight. And as the clock strikes 12, savor a glass of sparkling wine as you toast the start of the New Year. Tickets to the Gallery's New Year's Eve Countdown Party are at P995 net per person.

Celi SYNTHE Eastwood Café and The Gallery are at the lobby level of Eastwood Richmonde Hotel, 17 Eastwood Road, Eastwood City, Bagumbayan, QC. Eastwood Richmonde Hotel is located right beside the new Ateneo Blvd. Access from the mall is on the second level.

San international SMS promo

Send holiday greetings to your loved ones abroad with San Miguel's International SMS promo, for as low as P5 per message, until Dec. 31. With international text rates of only P5, you can express the same greetings and the warmth of the season to your family and friends more often. International text rates also apply in Canada, Malaysia, Macau, Japan, India and Brunei, while text messages to 40 other countries, like China, Australia, Kuwait, Thailand, Indonesia, India, New Zealand, Israel, Finland, Mexico, Guam, Kuwait and Puerto Rico, are just P5 per text message. There are no access codes or membership or special cards required for you to enjoy the lowest international rates of San. The San international SMS promo is open to all prepaid subscribers. Call 2007 using a Sun mobile phone or 2884000 otherwise. Visit www.sunmobile.com.ph.

AVIAN, at a special "Disney on Ice package" until today, Dec. 28, and get one free Upper 8 or GA ticket with a purchase of four Upper 8 or GA tickets.

Special design edition

MYHOME'S COLLECTORS Edition 2012: International Interiors features Filipino designers who have adapted design styles in a foreign landscape and become known in international design.

In the midst of homes, readers are provided a survey of global styles and trends adapted locally.

In international influences, accessories and furniture are highlighted in creative vignettes.

An internationally seasoned, Filipinos who have carved their own niche in the global design scene are featured.

In the internationally inspired section, homes that showcase applications of different historical and cultural perspectives are shown.

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LIFESTYLE Home&Entertaining

Use colors to turn your setting from holiday wedding to party

Starbursts of roses make a perfect bridal element, while Christmas balls are a nod to the season

WHITE accent chargers add the touch of whimsy.

By Joseph Cortes
Contributor

IN ANNA Fay Plana-Rasul's world, every day is a busy day. As creative director of The Peninsula Manila, she oversees all efforts for beautifying the hotel.

These cover floral arrangements, occasionses and gardens. The job is almost 24/7, especially during holidays, when guests expect the hotel to be dressed up.

That's why when this hot rapped the Fire accentuate an upprogram: wedding table setting be the yuletide season, as part of an ongoing collaboration with the Inquirer Lifestyle, it was not surprising that the task should land on the creative director's desk.

Plana-Rasul finds the task challenging—how do you combine the requirements of a wedding reception with Christmas?

The key to her table setting is to carefully choose the color palette to reflect the occasion and mood of the occasion. Flowers are the figurine for any wedding—a wedding and reception would simply be bare without them—the appeal for roses as focal point. Utilizing red and its myriad hues, all she needed was a wedding theme to tie up the two occasions.

She was inspired by the starburst sculpture in the ceiling of the Fire lobby. Rejuxtaposing it with roses, she not only connects color and theme, but also mirrors a Peninsula Manila original.

Placed by the presidential table, an upright floral arrangement adds a sense of occasion to the event.

She sets the starburst of roses in a frame that has been painted silver. From a distance, the roses spring forth from a central conglomeration of roses, says darling notwant to the bride's quintessence, mostly like roses and shrubs.

The floral creative department has four of these picture frames ready for use for any occasions; the celebration dictates

BELLE Crudo of New York Peninsula Hotel, joins Abdelmagi

GRACE and Felix Ang

VICKI Belo, Hayden Kho and Anna Gabrapolis

SELENE Uy

MIKEE and Sheila Romero

Inquirer.net Maria Pinsky, Tessa B Valdes, Tony Meloto, Punla Prince and Inquirer president Sandy Prieto Romualdez

Stylish fundraiser for Sulu; Natori comes home

I WOULDN'T want to raise funds for Jolo," Gov. Abdusakur Tan II said in his speech at the Philippine Fund-Raising Ball on Dec. 13 at the Peninsula Manila.

The ball, according to Lifestyle Asia editor-in-chief Anna Gutierrez Soberejana, dubbings, was "aimed at raising funds to build a community in Sulu."

Natori's and the Peninsula supported the only noble cause in the name of food sufficiency, green technology and renewable energy.

The great dinner menu was prepared by the "Chefs of Hope": Peninsula Manila's new executive chef Patrick Boschetti, El Chiringuito's J. Gamboa; Lolo Dad's Abel Manuel and the publicity's executive chef Fernando Aracama.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH
Maurice Arcache
Photos by Alex Von Hagen
powered by MAC

For menu, Ryan Cayabyab lingers had out full attention as well as the quality fashion show of Randy Ortiz's "Homage Collection."

An auction followed with the new groom, Jun Mercado-Arce at stake, as well as a chartered flight to any destination in the country aboard South-South Airline's Premier 328 aircraft: a luxurious way to a push-thrusters in Bordeaux, France, inclusive of business-class flights from EUR, a luxury Peninsula package (New York and Chicago), a European bike made in a UK community.

There there was a silent auction for dazzling bling-blings from Salcedo Auction Room superbly led by auctioneer Hamilton Mcleod.

Apich bouncing with the chilled bubbly and the cool Natural Enchantress, we all left with the happy thought that we had helped support the GK community project for Jhenuses Village, Iloilo.

More info? Visit www.lifestyleasia-mag.com, www.facebook.com/lifestyleasiamag, and www.twitter.com/LifestyleAsia

BUSINESS-INSPIRED Monet Till Winter collection

KEN and Jessa Natori

JC BUENDIA, Lisa Santa, Cassie Calayna, Kathy and Mike Huang

CAROL Santos, Major Director Gil, Vicki Zubiri, Manolo Soriano

Natori at Natori's

Natori's welcomed Natori to Manila with the opening of its first ever boutique outside the United States.

The development was announced during cocktails and the exclusive presentation of Natori's Fall Winter 2011 collection at Salon de Wing of the Peninsula.

"Natori's mission is to continue to bring home world-class labels to the Philippines, and with a brand like Natori pioneered by a homegrown talent, this gives us pride to announce its opening," said Natori's Corporate chief corp. president Jonaldo Tantoco.

Josie Cruz Natori, founder and CEO of Natori, said she "found the visual appeals of the East and the West" to create the global brand.

"When I did it from a body to the music of women as I am," she said. "I respond to it by intuition. I play by ear. I see by feeling. Both the strength and the vulnerability of Natori draw on the source of my upbringing, San mots Pilot."

The new collection is inspired by the Japanese festivals. Natori said she adopted "the art and spirit of the Samurai, and transposed it to empower." She added the new collection is inspired by the "traditional Japanese kimono, origami shapes, and sensual fabrics and textures."

The Natori boutique is at 2/F, Ledlet Section, Rockers Makati. It is also at Rockers Shangri-La Mall; 6/F Cuff Rooney Makati at 8233729 or Rockers Shangri-La at 6350634 or 50.

TIFFET Pascual, Angelito Cruz, Philip Cruz

Jing Monis Salon

The most gorgeous faces in the entertainment scene world flocked to the opening of the Jing Monis Salon at the third floor of the fashion enclave Bellevue Hotel, dubbings.

Bellevue chair Johnny Chan, general manager Hedrick Chan and marketing and communications director Ryan Chan welcomed our town's beautiful pack, dubbings.

Leading the ribbon-snipping were Vice President Jojomar Binay, Makati Mayor Junjun Binay and princess of all trades, Kris Aquino, surely!

EDWARD Santoso, Tonyboy Cojuangco, Angelita Cruz, Gretchen Barretto, Josie Natori, Marlon Santoso

CINTHY Rocio, Irene Arcenas

TINA Cuenca, Mutya's designer Ian Ginos, Ching Cruz, Arnel Pupa

LIFESTYLE Asia editor Anna Soberejana, Cristina Gomez, Baby Ignacio, Cheryl Tio, Sandra Lawrence Mikaelles, Andrew Verde, PJ Cole

LAURO and Grace Ruiz

ABET and Pinky Amador

Guests marveled at Jing's new elegant salon with its uber-chic design and sophisticated ambiance, offering the finest in hair and make-up services, paintings.

Then the guests indulged on Bellevue's renowned food, to genuinely warm hospitality and excellent service.

Yes! The salon is already a winner, paintings.

Call Bellevue at 7718381 or 5506850, 5559882, or visit www.thebellevue.com

Good food, good cause

The romance I entered the scene, I knew what was in store for us... good food, great times and good intentions.

Shaw Group of Restaurants and Casa Lucia Restaurant Philippines joined forces and held a fun-filled dinner at the newly opened Hobbitory's Bagdaj branch in Eastwood City in support of TEN Moves, paintings.

This story is the first in the country to sport Friday's new global, smart, contemporary look, lettuce and patrons who bought dinner tickets during the formal opening of... as supported TEN Moves.

Endorsed by the Department of Education, "it is a nationwide fundraising project that aims to gather two million Filipinos to donate P10 a day for the next 10 months to build 10,000 classrooms in public schools in the country's 10 most underprivileged municipalities," explained Butch Young president and CEO William Stelton and Coca-Cola Bottlers Philippines CEO Bill Schultz.

Students of the Little Red Schoolhouse in Bagong Silangan sang songs while the popular Ateneo de Manila basketball players acted as, would you believe, "servers" for the night, which blew the socks off the lattices and delighted everyone, paintings.

Proceeds from the charity dinner will benefit Coca-Cola Foundation's TEN Moves and its own Little Red Schoolhouse project.

JOHNNY, Chan and Patricia Chan

EJ LEUNG, Dondi Mariño, Paolo Pineda

MAGAFI Mayor Junjun Binay, Vice President Jojomar Binay, Jing Monis, Ryan Chan, Kris Aquino

JING Monis, Jessica Soho

LOVI Poe and handsome Paolo Avelino

DAN Paul Manuel, Bill Schultz, William Stelton, Eric Monteiro, Jing Dizon, Ronnie Acuzar

MARC Ann Ismail, Garen Lorenzo Marcaida

AMY Pulmo, Dada Vargas, Gerry Vargas, Lito Martinez, Lisa Rongallo

HERMAN Medina, Cas Jan Santos

CORRECTION
In the column about the PCCP Ball on Dec. 22, the photograph showing "Mabel Lhuillier" should have been Ambassador Philip Lhuillier. Our apologies. paragga

Ma. CECILIA Alcantara, Roger Haman

BOOY Calimag, Josh Vanlandingham, Martin Lacaster and TEAM staff.

CANDLES set in glass containers add a sense of occasion to any table setting.

RED ROSES blend with subtle pink carnations, dark purple hydrangeas, organic green button berries and crimson cockscomb.

AN ARRANGEMENT of bird-of-paradise and bells-of-Ireland adds an exotic touch to the holiday wedding table setting.

Use colors to turn your setting from holiday wedding to party

From page B1

the color of the fruits.

The medium of roses is repeated on the floral centerpiece for the presidential table. The colors of the blooms are apparent only when seen up close. The roses are not just red; they come in deep red, rose red and fuchsia.

Pink makes a surreptitious appearance every so often, like a whiff of fresh air added to the arrangement. To add color and floral texture to the centerpiece, Plaza Bonal adds blooms of the striking crimson cockscomb, purple hydrangeas, pink carnations and green button berries.

Festive touches

Spread throughout the floral centerpiece are shimmery touches of the holidays, like little balls in green, silver, purple and clear resin. These three are other festive touches, like bigger balls embellished with green sequins.

The floral setting is repeated on glass columns placed on opposite sides of the table. The columns are filled with water and topped with huge spherical floral arrangements that mirror the table centerpiece. Fresh branches of curly willow spring forth from the flowers, hanging from the branches are metallic balls that resemble sparkling snowflakes.

Adding a touch of whimsy to the arrangements are white ostrich feathers. Plaza Bonal says the originally planned to use peacock feathers, but the green and blue in peacock feathers are more apt for a setting in gold, which is inappropriate for weddings.

The presidential table is reserved in green suits to serve as contrast against the overall red theme. The Tiffany chairs and candles in clear glass pedestals and hurricane lamps add that festive yet elegant touch.

Plaza Bonal's setting is reminiscent—with a few touches, it could move from tropical to yuletide in a cinch. After the reception, the entire setting could easily be transformed into a Christmas party by just taking out all touches of pink.

A FRAME of the bride and groom's initials in the cocktail setting makes the designer the presidential table.

NATIONAL Artist Napoleon Abueva's starburst sculpture in the Peninsula ceiling inspires this starburst of roses.

STEPHANIE T. Chong, TPH director of luxury Asia Pay Plaza Bonal, TPH executive director Sonja Vollrath, TPH general manager

GREEN tablecloth serves as contrast against the red blooms and Tiffany glass containers.

decorates the flowers with ostrich feathers. Instead of green, the cocktail tables are draped in a taupe fabric that complements the red color scheme and green tablecloth.

This isn't the first time the Peninsula creative manager has designed a wedding reception in time for the holidays. Last year, she had engagements for both Dec. 29 and 30, just a few days before New Year's Eve. However, as those occasions, her designs were both traditionally bridal, as requested by the newlyweds. For some couples, the wedding season isn't that important than their wedding is the holiday.

For inquiries about the Peninsula Manila's packages, visit www.peninsula.com.

Anne Pay Plaza Bonal, Chanbi Orlan Lopez-Cyngbuck Salon.

Contact Rita Nevi at [illegible] or e-mail [illegible]@[illegible].com and [illegible]@gmail.com. Visit the website at www.ritanevi.wordpress.com.

TOY KINGDOM's
TOY CLEARANCE SALE AT SMX

Xbox 360 250 GB Arcade version.
(NOW P13000 FROM P17499.75)

It's never too late to play Santa as Toy Kingdom, the amazing toy superstore, launches its Toy Clearance Sale from December 27 to January 1 at the SMX Convention Center Hall 4.

This is perfect for kids who like to spend their Christmas cash gifts on a special toy, or for grown-ups who still have to complete their Christmas list. They'll love this post Christmas event's amazing deals with up to 70% off on selected and well-loved toy brands, as well as merchandise featuring favorite characters such as Disney, Sponge Bob, Gross the Explosive Bee 10-coat Tocathon tees.

Find more gift ideas at Toy Kingdom stores, Toy Kingdom Express at all SM Department Stores and visit our website at www.toykingdom.ph.

Skatemaster 2-in-1 bike and skateboard.
(NOW P1499.75 FROM P3499.75)

TOY KINGDOM™

THE AMAZING TOY STORE!

TOY CLEARANCE SALE

up to 70% off on selected items

Dec 27 – Jan 1

SMX CONVENTION CENTER Hall 4

Bear Slide.
(NOW P3999.75 FROM P6999.75)

Transformers Dark of the Moon Cyberverse Hasbro Deluxe Class Bumblebee in robot mode.
(NOW P550 FROM P699.75)

Kids can become their favorite alien characters with the Ben 10 Ultimate Omni Badge.
(NOW P700 FROM P1399.75)

Flintstones Fred Flintstone and Pebbles Flintstone's game and characters.
(NOW P1699.75 FROM P1300)

Toy Story 3 Flip Open Sofa featuring Woody.
(NOW P750 FROM P1099.75)

Cars, Disney Princess and Mickey Mouse Clubhouse bolster pillows.
(NOW P200 EACH FROM P399.75)

Dora the Explorer pillow.
(NOW P450 FROM P900)

LIFESTYLE Parenting

Sharing is easier than ever.

SMART Postpaid brings you the new Nokia N9

With NEAR FIELD COMMUNICATION technology which makes it possible to access and share data with a tap, perfect for pairing and sharing!

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Visit a SMART store near you or call 888-1111 for more details.

NOKIA Connecting People

SMART

How to be your own boss—and have more time with the family

What made these entrepreneurs quit their day jobs? Here's how and why they made the big move

By Jonjo Gallegos Yaranon
Contributor

MANY CUBICLE denizens dream of becoming their own boss. But before you take the plunge, do you have what it takes to quit your day job?

Three young entrepreneurs share how their paths led them to running their own businesses. Some leveraged networks they developed from their work experience; some spotted opportunities in the market and seized on it, while others took the reins of their family's corporations.

Banker-turned-BPO owner

A Business Management graduate of De La Salle University, Alana Ong worked as bank management trainee then as trading officer for the treasury group's foreign exchange for three years total. After earning an MBA from Asian Institute of Management, she worked as a staff operations manager for a few months before returning to banking as trading officer.

Having left the corporate world in 2004, the 33-year-old mother of two is now managing director of her family's business process outsourcing company.

"I was my parents' who decided to put up a business but they didn't want to handle the day-to-day operations anymore," Anna said. "So they asked me and my sister if we were willing to leave our jobs and work for the family business. I had to weigh the pros and cons, and we had several meetings to

more (1 to 2)

GARFIELD BY JIM DAVIS

A. LIPIN BY ED ABERA

PUGAD BABOY BY PH. LUCIO

DICK TRACY BY JOE STATON AND MIKE CLARK

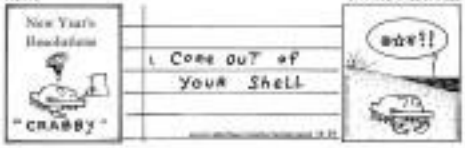
LOVE MOTS BY ELIZABETH CHONGLO

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT

RIKO MACHINE BY FRANK ABERIN

SEN BY DANIEL SHELTON

MUTTS BY PATRICK MCDONNELL



SHERMAN'S LAGOON BY JIM TOOMEY

DUSTIN BY STEVE KELLEY AND JEFF PARKER

TULDOK BY MARA COLI

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Conversations with others to figure out the powerful folks. You're open to further improvements and make changes. People will listen to you.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) You feel passionate about politics, religion and world issues today. Do not force your beliefs on others. However, you obviously have a right to your own opinion.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) You'll want to invest in something your own hard-earned cash about dental property, furnishings, home, debt and anything you own jointly with others. People will be impressed at your straight words.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Relationships will continue and close friends will be very essential today. Both parties can be honest about what they want. Be ready to listen to them.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22) This is a great day to think about how you can improve your health and, possibly, how you can increase your luck. You're on a bit a personal improvement journey.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) Romance is somewhat tricky on your part today. You might find exactly on passionate discussions or love and entertaining decisions this occasion. Other romance is always your best choice.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) Others have spent time about home, finances things at home, out on them. Sometimes you want to clear up personal issues or anything that has to do with your home or family. Find a way to make it more comfortable.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) You're especially something today. This is a wonderful day for those of you in sales, marketing, teaching, selling or writing. You know what you want to say.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) You might find yourself about being something today. You should have a hard time getting your point across to others. Be sure to listen to what others have to say.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) Your experiences with others will be intense today. However, personally, you probably would prefer something that is more in a relationship, some of the others in your life.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) Others are looking to you for support. You are good to be the subject of anything, and you have the courage to do what you think is the best for you.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20) You might find someone powerful today, or be confined, and might find someone in a situation of intense poverty, or one with a criminal attitude. Avoid dangerous places.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that each row, column, and every 3×3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. For more programs or www.sudoku.com

Answers to previous puzzle

1	3	4	6	5	2	9	8	7
7	8	9	3	1	4	5	6	2
6	4	2	9	7	5	3	1	8
5	2	8	7	9	1	6	3	4
4	9	3	5	6	8	1	7	2
3	7	1	2	4	6	8	9	5
8	6	9	4	1	3	2	5	9
9	1	5	8	2	7	4	2	6
2	5	6	1	8	9	7	4	3

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

		4	6					
	8		3					
6				7				9
5	2	8			1	6	3	
		3						2
		1						8
		9	4	1	3	2	6	5
		5		8		4		7
		6		5		8		3

Difficulty Level: ★★★

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

1 Bar, table
4 Musical work
8 Pitcher
11 Ill — (from the pedestrian)
12 Cause for discussion
13 Wheel's axis
14 Fishing implement
15 Mystery
16 Have a hard coating
17 Tree
18 Road repairing
20 Bird's beak
21 Bridge or Rice
22 Bridge or Rice
24 Dark skinned
26 Small amount
27 Bird
28 Actually called
29 Cure or lotion
30 Santa — California
31 Bank of Rockland
32 Nearby
33 Bird's beak
34 Dispersed
35 Sign language
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37 Uncontrolled movement
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SM HYPERMARKET boss, happy to serve customers their Dasmariñas and nearby stores at Cavite

SM PRESIDENT for food retail Hubert Sy, SM Supermalls president Annie Garcia, John Cosmo, SM Hypermarket president Robert Kwan

INQUIRER columnist Micky Fonda, Sonny Floro, Anna Oberoson of Belgian Embassy check out fresh produce and homegrown cuisine in SM Marketmall

Go marketing at the mall in Dasmariñas

RESIDENTS of the city of Dasmariñas gave a rarin shopping concept a warm welcome when the SM Marketmall recently opened its doors to the public.

SM executives led by SM Food retail President Hubert Sy opened its doors to welcome the first wave of shoppers.

The first public-private partnership between a city government and SM Prime Holdings, the five-story, over 10,000-sq m Marketmall is envisioned to be a destination for bushes in search for fresh products and homegrown cuisine.

Designed to modern, multi-store building, it is well-lighted and well-ventilated. Open 24 hours, it is the first vertical wet market development with a hypermarket, 1,875 wet and dry market stalls, restaurants, services, and a cinquelan area.

The stainless steel stalls in the wet are dry areas are properly zoned and color-coded. There is also a multi-level parking area with provision for 252 vehicles, as well as accessible transportation for commuters.

During opening day, customers had a glimpse of Cavite's bustling food offerings at the Tinatba de Dasmariñas, where foods like the famous bitse kwayan, Tinapang Salitsa, Seasoned Crackers, Enticing Oriental Wine, Cabernados, Pacific Negra, Mushroom, and other Cavite products were showcased.

Earlier in the day, no less than Cavite Vice Governor Ricto Castelo-Jonbon, Dasmariñas City Rep. Pidi Barzaga, and Dasmariñas Mayor Jenny Barzaga cluttered ribbons at the ribbon cutting ceremonies with Rolando Ay and SM food retail president Hubert Sy.

SM Prime Holdings' Hans Christian Sy, Jr., SM Hypermarket Robert Kwan, SM Supermalls president Annie Garcia, and Sr. Leoben Peregrino also joined them.

Located along Dasmariñas Bagong Bayan Congressional Road, Dasmariñas, City, Cavite, the SM Marketmall serves customers from Dasmariñas City and nearby towns such as Imus, Cavite, Carmona, Silang, Gen. Trias, and even some part of Trece Martires City.

Food tenants include Jollibee, Mang Inasal, and Chowking, as well as services like BDO, Smart Padala, Mr. Quickie, Dermacare, LBC, Inkstop, 6/49 Travel, M. M. Builders, A-1 Driving and Driving Cycle.

The SM Marketmall also has PWD-friendly facilities, and showcases environmentally sustainable practices with a sewage treatment plant that recycles water, as well as proper garbage segregation and disposal.

The SM Marketmall's design and construction team includes Jose Siu Ling and Associates, Architects and Designers; and B. M. Cabanela Construction and Management Corp. General Contractors.

CAVITE Rep. Pidi Barzaga, SM Supermalls president Annie Garcia, Vice Governor Ricto Castelo-Jonbon, Pelicidad Sy, Fr. Leoben Peregrino, SM food retail president Herbert Sy, SM Prime Holdings' Hans Christian Sy Jr., SM Hypermarket president Robert Kwan

TAMARA Salitsa, laterite, shooing on burgers from Cavite

TAHONG chips, malunggay seaweed and fish crackers, dried fish, Café Amadeo from Amadeo, Cavite, considered the "coffee capital of the Philippines"

Tips on cleaning the floor

SCOTCH-BRITE MOPS shine bright ideas for efficient floor cleaning.

• Not all floors are the same. Know the floor type that you will clean to know the cleaning method to use, as well as the cleaning tools you will need.

• Different floors require different cleaning methods and cleaning agents for easy upkeep but can cost another.

Floor types can vary from the most common like ceramic tiles, vinyl and linoleum, and to expensive floor types like hardwood and marble.

Ceramic tiles, vinyl and linoleum would just need regular polishing while hardwood and marble need extra care to keep it from scratches and chemicals that can cause wear and tear.

• Clean the floor. Make sure that you get the big junks and objects off your way before you sweep the surface and start mopping the floor to make sure you get all the dirt and grime off.

• Different mop types for different uses. Know what type of cleaning tool to use because some will work for wet areas and some for dry areas.

For regular cleaning, you can use Scotch-Brite Everyday Cleaning Mop. Made of cotton, it has looped ends to prevent fraying and fitting.

For wet surfaces, you can use Scotch-Brite Super Drying Mop made of micro-fiber strips which quickly absorbs spilled liquid and effectively dries wet surfaces.

• Know the right accessory for your mopping task like the Scotch-Brite Mop Wringer that makes mopping more convenient and definitely more hygienic. The bucket also has innovative features like a 20-liter volume capacity and anti-slip grip.

• Know the right way to mop your floor. After you sweep the dust, mop from the innermost part of the room. Mop from corner to corner and from wall to wall. Don't mop in circles or you don't stop on the cleaned area. Mop the area by doing a side to side motion to make sure you cover all spots.

Scotch-Brite Mops has a small round mop head that can clean even the corners and hard to reach areas of the floor. It also has a lightweight handle to keep your arms from tiring easily while cleaning.

Visit http://www.scotch-brite.com.ph

Say goodbye to creases, the easy way

PHILIPS GC 2908 now achieves that immediately feels still does not exist with the Philips PowerLife Iron GC2908 range.

Designed to make ironing as fun and effective as possible, the PowerLife Iron GC2900 range instantly removes creases make ironing more unique for fuss; more effective results, while its premium soleplate allows for easy gliding across all fabrics like silk, jersey satin, jeans, or garment plate cotton.

With a steam boost of up to 110 g/minute and a continuous steam output of up to 35g/minute, the iron easily removes creases to deliver a smooth and wrinkle-free garment, perfect every for the easy way.

The closer who may be afraid that the steam droplets may stain their garments, the iron also has a drip-stop system to help you iron delicate fabrics at low temperatures. Its "calc clean slider" also helps to remove scales from the iron to ensure a longer life span and maintain the performance of the iron consistently.

Offering fast and effective results, Philips, the global leader in irons remains committed to offering consumers innovative and efficient solutions to meet their garment care needs.

Visit www.philips.com.

Small changes for big savings in 2012

LET US START 2012 your right by adopting little changes that are easy to do.

I do not have to tell you how prices of things, particularly food, keep going up and up. We are lucky if we are still able to buy enough food, but many Filipinos have to do without a lot of things. We can help our fellows and other people by being less wasteful.

Recently Palmer, writing for the US News & World Report, says small changes can add up to significant savings and less wasteful consumption. He gets suggestions from Jonathan Bloom's book, "American Wasteland."

An easily doable suggestion is organizing the refrigerator. Bloom suggests having a "use it up" shelf for items that will soon go bad, so you remember to eat them. After all, if you cannot use something, you may forget to eat it. Bloom, Palmer says, also suggests putting new groceries in the back and bringing older items in the front.

Filipinos can continue their habit of going to the wet market or shopping almost daily instead of buying in bulk. Bloom points out that bulk shopping increases the chances of spoilage. Palmer says Bloom thinks "shopping more frequently gives you flexibility to make use of unexpected leftovers."

Bloom also suggests learning recipes that will use some of the leftovers. Pumpkin can make delicious pies, and stale bread, bread pudding and crumbs can also be turned into something new. Banana bread, chicken pot pies, salad, fruit mix, and soups can be made out of leftovers and vegetables approaching expiration dates. Leftover chicken bones and vegetable scraps can be turned into stock as a base for soups.

And, as I have said before, use expiration or best before dates as guides. Bloom recommends relying more on sense of smell to determine whether food is still edible.

Unless you are sure you will eat the bread, fries or other appetizers put on your table when you are out, Bloom suggests that you decline the freebies.

"Once the bread basket hits your table, it can no longer be served to others," he says. And, of course, do not be embarrassed to have a doggie bag. "Don't let the leftovers go to waste," Bloom says. He even suggests bringing your own containers when you dine out. Restaurants are increasingly friendly.

At home, Palmer says Bloom suggests using smaller plates so you take smaller servings. You can get refills when necessary. With smaller plates, you and the kids are less likely to take more than you will eat. Bloom suggests eating at home as much as possible. He says people are less likely to waste food that they or a loved one made.

Bloom also suggests learning fruits and vegetables for best value shopping. The will pointed the produce items getting bottled and brined for leftovers from which will lessen spoilage. Make sure you do not shop on an empty stomach, so this can lead to impulse buys and someone easy stocking up, which can lead to overpurchasing (and waste).

Let us start our leftovers. Use the freezer to preserve them and other items you cannot use right away. You cooked bags to prevent freezer burn. Write down the date and a description of the item to remind you when to use it. Bloom even suggests labeling the prices so we become alert to avoid waste.

Christmas treats

Globe Online Store is giving shoppers an easy way to buy the latest Globe products this holiday season. Visit http://globe.com.ph/globe-online_shop to see the products and services available, such as the latest phones and gadgets bundled with postpaid plans, prepaid bits, Globe Broadband products and eReloads.

The 24/7 store has promos for certain products and services. Citibank cardholders can double their chances of winning as every P300 minimum reload saves entries to a raffle on Jan. 17. Promo ends Dec. 31.

Happy New Year!

Send letters to The Consumer, *Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 1000 Chino Roces Ave. cor. Mercedes and Pasong Tamo, 2204 Makati City; fax (632)7919394, or e-mail lbob-dl@inquirer.com.ph*

THE CONSUMER
Linda B. Bobis

Extended Holiday with BDO's Grab a Holiday Treat!

What's better than holiday shopping?
Getting a holiday treat immediately after! ... even later!

BDO Credit Cards once again makes the season shopping more exciting with Grab a Holiday Treat Promo!

All you have to do is shop and shout anywhere using your BDO Mastercard, BDO Visa, BDO Unicard, BDO JCB, or Kabayan Credit Card from December 26, 2011 to January 31, 2012 to enjoy P2,500 or more and exchange your receipt stub for a ticket of your choice.

- Manood ng sine for Holiday Treat Showtimes from Shopping Receipts
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How to be your own boss—and have more time . . .

From page E1

how I finally decided."

How did she know she was financially ready? "There wasn't much change, because when I joined the business, I was given a salary a little higher than from my last job, so it's still like working for a company to that sense, but with a greater responsibility. If I don't do my job, no one else will. And, if I don't do it well, the consequences are swift."

She described the first few weeks after her shift from corporate: "It was different, challenging and stressful. There were times when I asked myself if I made the right decision."

Today, Irma is grateful to have stood by her decision. "Thank God it's been well. Business-wise and personally. God has been so good in providing us with stable clients, good managers and staff. And my job allows me to work from home (or anywhere) and manage my own schedule (since our children [reopen] 24 hours).

"That was a big plus when I became a mom: because I was able to stay home and be hands-on with my boys [and sponsor in with whatever I have the chance, usually when they're sleeping]. I get to bring them to school every day, spend time with them at home."

Will she ever consider going back to corporate? "At this point, and anytime, business is doing well and nothing beats having a flexible schedule, which allows me to spend more time with my family. Though the responsibility is greater—you practically don't have a vacation or you still work even while on vacation—it's very fulfilling."

Irma's advice to those considering taking the plunge is to, "Pray for God's plan. Do your homework—know your market, prepare financial projections, use different scenarios and conservative figures. Analyze the pros and cons."

IT specialist-turned-wedding photographer

Frank Dario Ita, Computer Engineering course from University of the Philippines-Diliman, two days after their graduation ball, Guy Bergqvist started working at Hewlett-Packard in 2005 as an IT support specialist. He had been a volunteer with them for six months before quitting his day job to make his sideline his main business.

The 30-year-old contemporary destination wedding photographer and aspiring cinematographer now runs Red Bluejay Photo [Dario.Ita@bluejayphotos.themes.com] full-time.

"I was really passionate for corporate in the first few years and a half, but I feel events became. I found something more soul-feeding and meaningful," said Ita. "And, yes, I have to admit, more financially rewarding, but that alone wasn't enough for me to leave. There are other IT companies that are higher paying, but I didn't consider transferring.

"I also had a change in priorities. My son Enjo was six months old at the time and he was growing up fast! My husband work-load at BellSharp had me working seven days on-and-off, and I was a bridesmaid for a number of prolonged out-of-the-country shoots and weekday weddings. I felt guilty because I couldn't give my 100 percent to HP anymore."

Then young father realized he was ready to go on his own when he forecasted two years of savings, which is approximate one wedding shoot equivalent to one month's salary at HP.

Asked about what the first days were like after leaving the office, he said, "I had more time to do more meaningful things: be with my wife and child, and do video and blog posts a lot more leisurely pace. There was a time I was editing for the sake of finishing because of my day job, losing full-time strength back the joy in shooting and editing," he said.

"Leaving the corporate world is a leap of faith—you'll lose a 'regular' monthly income. You may realize that you're not as important [as] you thought ingrained in our consciousness must we were kids. But there's one thing I've learned as well: Trust in God. Always have weddings as well...mangoes to my father, financial crisis and all—but Always won't cut down on spending for weddings."

"If I didn't leave my day job and just relied on job security, I would have missed out on the following: our own condominium, a brand-new car, a couple of trips abroad (both wedding and non-wedding related), and precious time with my wife and kid. Nothing beats that."

Given that, Guy can't imagine himself returning to employment. "Corporate job, no. But NGO/socio-civic work or church work/ministry, that's a yes, if it's aligned with fulfilling my purpose in life," he said.

On deciding when to leave, I had to choose: wait for around two years to become a manager or resign and go full-time now. The point of conflict would be those two years: Will what I accomplish in two years on my own compensate for or outweigh what I'll get being a manager? I got promoted already and I was one step away from becoming a manager," he explained. "I haven't looked back. My wife and I have plenty of those 'but's to lay' moments."

His advice for those planning to quit their day job? "Be patient. If you can do both your corporate job and your small business, stay [as] as long as you're still single. I stayed in HP for five years, with the last year and a half doing photography on weekends. My manager's knew about things. I wouldn't just have to align it with them if I would have to go ahead for certain shoots.

"Be practical, and yet be also willing to take leaps of faith. Remember: day-to-day 'everything is perfect' will never come. You will have to let go of something. But just be sure that what you're getting in return is far greater and worth it. Pray about it, pray for discernment and wisdom. Know your purpose in life.

"That's the clincher, actually. I know a couple of people whom the Lord has blessed in the corporate world. The corporate world is not for everybody. God has individual plans for us, there's no 'one size fits all.' If the Lord is calling you to be a blessing in the corporate world, then be a blessing there; if the Lord is calling you to do something else, do it with all your heart."

Engineer-turned-factory outlet owner

Thirty-four-year-old Jojo Hizon graduated from De La Salle University with a degree in Industrial Engineering, minor in Mechanical Engineering, before starting his nine-year relationship with Nike in 2000 as a mobile coordinator and product training specialist. After four years as regional sales representative and another three years as Singapore to Southeast Asia product line manager, Jojo left Nike in 2008.

Inspired by factory outlet stores across the US, China, Australia, Thailand and Singapore, Jojo relocated to Manila to put up SUPA Center (supacenter.com), a factory outlet in Parañaque that carries premium brands like Nike, adidas, Converse, Asics, Levi's, Mizuno and Wilson at no-mall-like prices.

"I saw a very big potential in doing retail in Manila," he explained. "I felt I had the tools to make that plan work. If I didn't do it, I would feel bad, regretting it for a lifetime."

Aside from his home he says financially ready, he revealed, "Nike being with Nike for close to 10 years, I had learned a lot, and had gained a lot of values which I think would be necessary to make my plan come into fruition. I had some savings, plus my best friend of over 23 years was in love—my business partner (signed by Nike's founders, I made one of the biggest decisions in my life."

The change in schedule and lifestyle wasn't easy for Jojo. "The first few months, it was totally hard for me to adjust to the setup," he said. "First, I wasn't getting the same monthly salary I used to get. But after realizing that this is my own business, I was back on track. Second, I was used to traveling a lot, and with my relocation to Manila, I am unable or do it anymore. It's really hard if you just focus on your ultimate goal—which was to have something which would help me reap lifetime rewards for all the things I had to give up."

But the gamble eventually paid off for Jojo. "I am very happy because I get to spend more time with family and friends. Being far from family, especially during and not trying times, was something I couldn't take. I needed to be back to be a pillar of strength," he said.

"Business-wise, I think we have grown after two years. We are expanding to areas where big schools are situated, with stronger store setups. The new store we are opening is Bole Academy. I am my own boss, and I am able to control my time," said Jojo.

Going back to corporate is not an option for him. "I don't think I ever will, because that would mean I am contemplating the idea of failing."

For those planning to leave the comfort of employment, Jojo advised, "I once learned this from a very successful business person: if you want to succeed with the business you are planning, you have to consider four things: be focused. Trust your instincts. Be confident with your plan. Be ready to take on entrepreneurial journeys. Another thing I learned from my business partner's mom: You can't just work hard, you have to work smart."

HR assistant-turned-bakery boss

Frank Ilchez is in cocoa and sponsor Brand Manager, "Favorite classic pastries and desserts remain!"

The 24-year-old finished his Humanities degree from Ateneo de Manila University, and got his diploma in Pastry and Bakery Arts from International School for Culinary Arts and Hotel Management before working as HR assistant for two years in a computer products corporation.

After an MBA at Asian Institute of Management, he worked as the school's institutional marketing manager for three and a half years.

The young father left the corporate world to take over his company's pastry counter...and plan for his wedding. "I figured, if I wanted to be really serious about putting up a business, I had to do it full-time," he said.

In gauging his readiness to turn his passion into his main source of income, he explained, "We just looked at the opportunity, if it was not too expensive, and if we could really make a little money. Then we went for it. I knew I had to set up the business before getting married, so I did it on my way out of the corporate world."

From shared what his life was like in the early days. "It was limited and stressful," he said. "Having setting up stage is usually the most stressful. Any mistake means we really were living with your family. We had to scrimp my start-up with people to help us to concentrate during that time."

His decision seems to have paid off. "Maybe realistic pay summer, super labor, or seeking bargain during Christmas," shared From. "We have three outlets and now we're supplying two F&B establishments. Our store is doing very well, our net as well, and one is doing so so. I'm actually less stressed, more at peace and generally happier now."

From dessert are a return to corporate life any time soon. He explained, "I don't think anyone's stupid enough to hire me; besides, I'm a pain to work with!"

He has this advice to those who wish to follow in his footsteps: "Try to put some money in the bank that will last you two years, just in case your business fails. Make sure you have people helping you: your spouse, girlfriend, a good friend, parents, you it's freakin' difficult to borrow money from a bank.

"Also, make sure you pick a business or something you really, really, really love, something you wouldn't mind doing every single day even if you weren't getting paid to do it. That way, you'd still be happy doing it even if your net income is not what you thought it would be."

IT specialist-turned-wedding photographer

Programmer to president

Jeff Ita grew up his corporate life in 2000 to start Stallion Philippines, a cloud computing company specializing in software-as-a-service solutions. He graduated from De La Salle University with a Computer Engineering degree, and worked at Land Bank of the Philippines as a systems programmer for three years. He then worked at IBM Philippines as sales specialist for two and a half years, then as software account manager before moving to software company Computer Associates, where he spent seven years as sales director.

"I wanted to spend more time with my family," the 39-year-old explained. "I figured I could earn the same amount by just doing business, and at the same time have more flexibility with my time."

How did he know he was financially ready? The proud father of two confessed, "I didn't. It was a calculated risk."

Jeff shared what the first days were like being his own boss. "I found myself postponing/canceling meetings or rescheduling them, as I would have to go to Makati every day. I wanted to have all my meetings in one day to save on travel costs. But this habit slowed me down," he admitted. "But a good answer. He admitted realized that sales were slow; I forced myself to go to the office with or without a meeting."

That's wise, he continued. "Business runs always on the better, and as a businessman, you always try to find ways to make it better. You can never stop. But I also get to spend a lot more time with the kids. Working as corporate still never give me the same flexibility I have now to tend to personal time, although I miss working for corporate sometimes."

If you're thinking of leaving your job to start your own business, "Go into something you like doing," Jeff recommended. "Money is always a motivation but a shouldn't be the only thing. You should enjoy what you do, other wise, you will never give it your best effort."

From corporate to making corporate giveaways

Armed with an Industrial Engineering degree from De La Salle University, Raoul Navarrete logged in two years as account executive in GMTC-NYK Pil Japan Shipping Line. In 2002, he left his job to explore other career options.

"I went to the US on an adventure and stayed there for six months. I checked out how it is to live there and see the lifestyle of the Filipinos. I realized America is not everything; it's all work and it's not like what the Hollywood project every time they come home," he said.

Yet, he knew going back to the office grind wasn't for him. "But at 24, I wasn't ready financially. I had the support of my parents and I wasn't paying for anything at the time. So, nothing was lost. the losses, cut, even gas at times," Raoul shared.

Today, Raoul owns and operates corporate giveaways manufacturer Green Isle 8 Premiums.

"Before I hit 30, I had my own money, but I was dependent in the sense that since I was single then, I had no reason to get my own place. And, every time I needed extra cash, I would still ask for my parents' assistance," he explained. "After I got married, my wife and I rented for two years, then we bought our house on our third year."

Raoul started managing clients his early days of going solo. "I was always related because it was my long-time dream to be a businessman. I was enjoying what I was doing, so even if it was not yet financially rewarding then, it didn't really matter because I was enjoying it.

"But signs at Ugaya is really on top of the basic commandments of businessmen, no matter how successful they are. I experienced as many sleepless nights, checking production, meeting deadlines, managing people, and I still do it everyday," he said.

"Business is enormously expanding. I have 48 people more or less on my payroll. I have expanded my network, and I have gained the trust and confidence of clients. But it still feels like a new experience every time there's a new project coming," he added.

"Personally, almost everything is accessible. I'm still living within my means and managing my finances well. But I still know how to enjoy my little earnings. I make sure I don't deprive myself of anything valuable I know I can afford."

When asked if he misses corporate life, he answered, "I will consider getting more corporate accounts!"

He also sounds for those thinking of starting their own business: "Live your dream—DO! note that it will never be an overnight success!"

ENTERTAINMENT
Editor Ernesto G. Polardo

Memo from Big Boss: Stop talk of scandal

By the Entertainment Staff

IT'S OFFICIAL. Big Boss has issued a memo ordering employees, particularly on-camera talents, not to discuss the scandal involving Cristy Fermin and Jiro.

"We were told never to mention CF and his scandalous Partner by name on any show," said a mole.

Why the blackout? Is Mr. Manager, big the strokes from CST Dot. BB suddenly realize that CS could **organize whatever game she** wants by her pound on her?

Delaying tactic

Sources allege that leaders of a movie cop-killing Bonecrusher Personality are making things difficult for the producers of another film starring another Influential Celebrity.

Apparently, PP's people have asked a certain supplier to prioritize their film, at the expense of KC's movie. As a result, the release of KC's movie was delayed.

A mole suspects it's "sabotage," designed to hurt the box-office chances of KC's movie. KC's movie was unable to open on time to several cinemas because of the rush.

Blossoming or bristling

Beautiful Star insists she has moved on, but, really, she's still hurting.

In her latest act of rebellion against Former Sweetheart, JH announced on a provocative pictorial for a sexy men's mag.

JH also guested a rather intriguing interview—raising questions more than providing answers, no-other step to cope with heartbreak?

Mid-lifing together

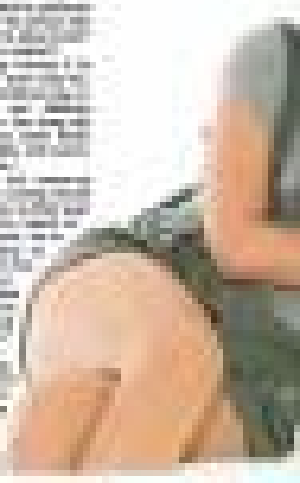
Showbiz Kuchera are aghast. Controversial Celebrity is rumored to be paired with Hunky Actor in her next project.

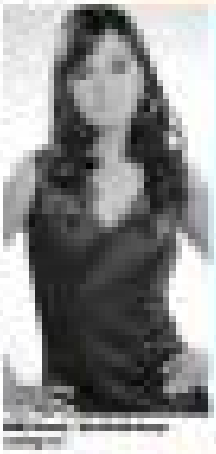
CC has eyes on a May December romance and, in her proposed script, BA should be wearing short bro. She also insists on having steamy bed scenes with FM, according to a well-placed source.

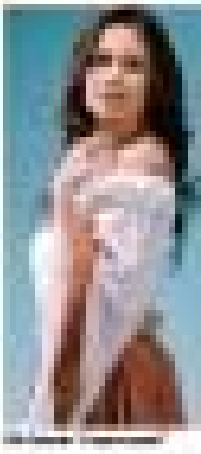
INFO: FI

RAPTER Circa picture of "Kaya" Dantes

Memo from Big Boss: Stop...







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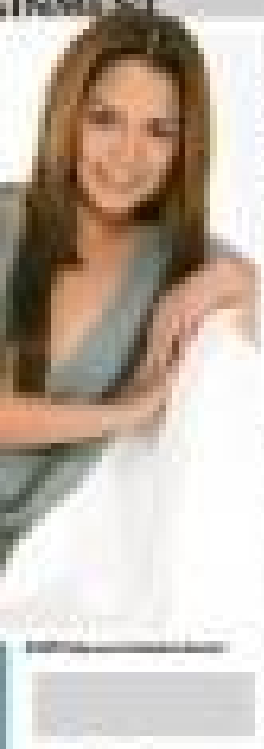
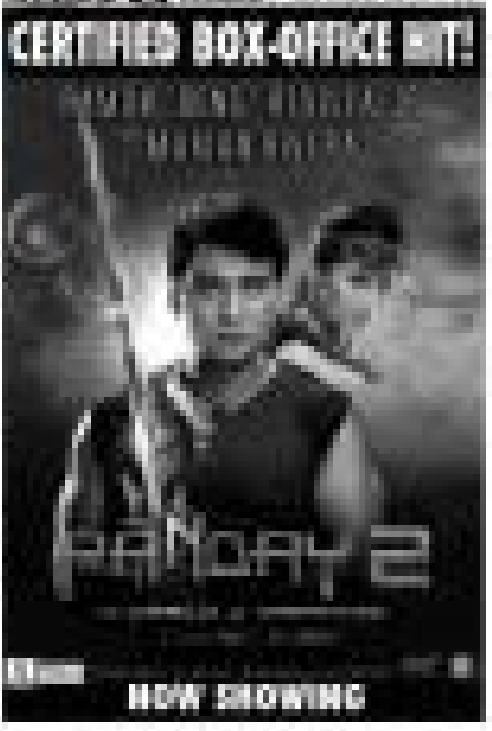
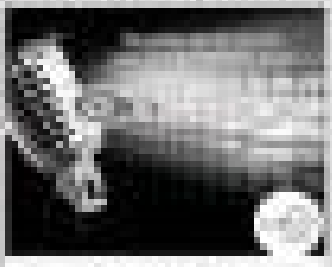




MOVIE TIME

MOVIE SPECIAL



MALL EVENTS

MALL SPECIAL

SCENE from "Ang Dangal ni Eleanora"

'Dangal' wins in Indonesia

THE WINNING streak of the homegrown at the 2nd Indonesia Indie Tribute continues. Bernard Angel Gamolo's film, "Ang Dangal ni Eleanora," receives awards—Golden Hanoman (for best Asian feature film) and Silver (given by the Indonesian film community)—at the Jogja-NetPac Asian Film Festival in Indonesia on Dec. 17. Dangola described the twin triumph as a "wonderful Christmas present."

Rayzel San Diego A.

Three 'Protégé' finalists—winners all

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

LIMAH Bartolome

KRISZIA Hart

THE GRAND finals of GMA-7's "Protégé" singing tilt fielded an all-female trio of 18-year-old contenders for the top slots of P1 million worth of prizes. The first number in the "ultimate" musical face-off was a really striking duet performed by Krissa Hart and her mentor, Aiza Seguerra.

Aiza is a bell-pop singer, but she showed us where she displayed an unusually rich and wide vocal range to make the number truly special. Where did these heavenly-ethereal notes come from?

For her part, Krissa was able to hold her own and impressed us with her finely-honed singing, which fueled her to be the evening's best, since the other two finalists never rose to the "top" before second.

The rift was supposed to focus on the new singers, not their mentors, but we noticed that Aiza's noticeably participation in the first duet were extra points for Krissa, who later emerged as the GMA top winner.

For her part, **Lovely Bartolome** (mentored by Jaya) initially came off as less than diodic because her mentor wasn't "in consonance" with her actual looks. Still, we appreciated the bigness and brassiness of her singing voice.

The problem with the "Lovely-Jaya" duet was that they chose a song from our "Juicy" musical that wasn't right for their voices. Jaya, in particular, had a hard time doing justice to the song's initially debut, rather than belted, sweet. Later, however, as the song soared and they hit its high notes, they did just fine.

Incidentally, Lovely romped off with two awards—the viewers' choice and "most determined" (as in having had to overcome the biggest challenges) cash awards, and were home richer by P150,000.

But somebody who used to have to skip meals and sing to win "audience" appeas the word to cure her, all those winnings must have been a godsend!

'Most determined' honor

The third finalist, Linah Bernardo (mentored by James Gibbs), was in our eyes the rightful winner of the "most determined" honor, because she had to cope with the death of her younger brother right after he decided to make his debut for musical numbers. He could admiring her at the time for her fierce resolve to remain in consensus, despite her painful loss.

In terms of performance in their duet number for the tilt's finals night, however, the Linah-James tandem was relatively too laid-back, so the impact of their joint performance paled in comparison to the other two duets' showing.

In our view, however, of the most important part of the finals was each contender's solo number, since it gave viewers a chance to evaluate their performing abilities without their mentors' help.

Lovely came through best of all with her full-voiced rendition, but, we **weren't miffed when Krissa was de**clared the tilt's ultimate winner, because the good impression her finely-honed singing had made on us earlier in her duet with Aiza still held sway.

In any case, all three were winners, since GMA-7 put them all under a five-year contract. As for the jurors, their dizzying tour less than winning, because some of them bridged. Sentinel and hurred to volunteering their opinions, only by feeling behind the "wide shrug mouth" standard response. In fairness, judges should judge—not clue what they're supposed to be there for!

LOVELY Bartolome

ENTERTAINMENT

Celebrities' yearend vows

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

AS THE year is about to end, let's make an inventory of what we should do away with in 2012. In my case, I would try not to let my fears overrule my mind anymore in the coming year (Or are those my fursuits last words?).

After taking out "2011 loser" (it's time to make a turn to the better in 2012), **living** is no. Treat of the Dragon! May we all have fire to our belly to meet 2012 head-on.

ALEX Gonzaga

CESAR MONTANO: "I vow to never see the 2011 calendar again in 2012. Seriously, I will see to it that every step I make is focused only on my passion and not on my invention."

GLORIA DIAZ: "I vow not to eat rice anymore."

PHOEBE LA BARANDA: "I vow never to get drunk in 2012. I guess I'm getting older, that's why I can't handle a hangover anymore."

MINA: "I vow not to slack off on my fitness regimen."

ALEX GONZAGA: "I'll try not to watch any series or movies in bed so I can sleep early, especially if I have work the next day. I've been sleeping very late even if I have to wake up very early, that's why I'm always cranky in the morning."

MARK BALTAZAR: "I vow not to procrastinate anymore."

BAYANI AGBAYANI: "In 2012, I vow to stray away from foods that are rich in cholesterol. Yun kasi ng food cholesterol ko. Dahil siguro sa diaper lagyong comunidad."

KIM STOLTZ: "I vow never to speed in 2012 especially in SCTEX. I was on my way to Aurora to be with my wife **Pek** and our kids, wondering why most cars were driving slow. Driving is therapy for me so I went really fast, not knowing that speeding rules are highly enforced. When I got to the tollbooth, the highway police were waiting for me. They were big fans of 'Shamcey Supnet' and 'Shamdrive,' but gave me a ticket anyway after asking for autographs and having their pictures taken. Now I don't go faster than 100 kph in SCTEX."

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PHOEBE LA Baranda

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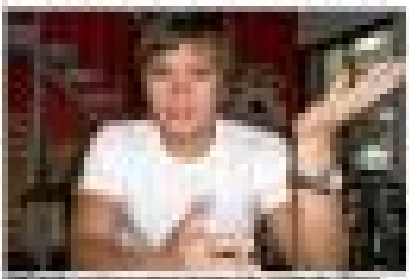
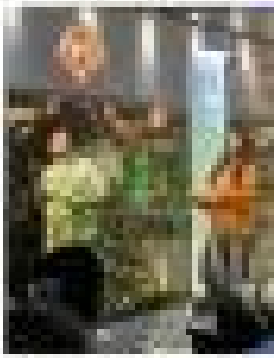
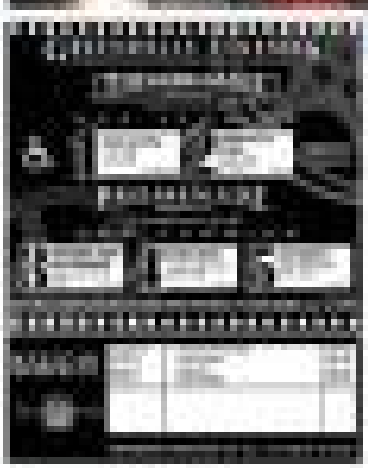
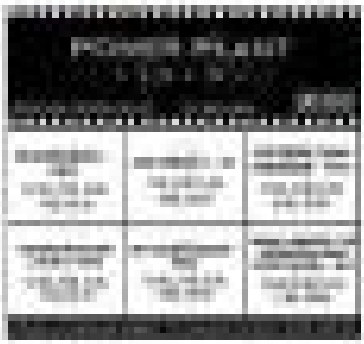


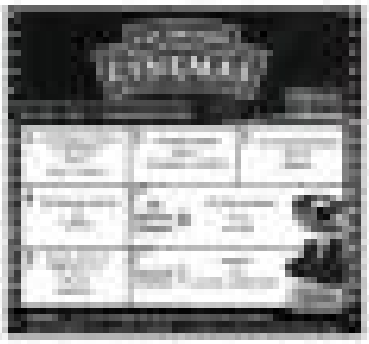


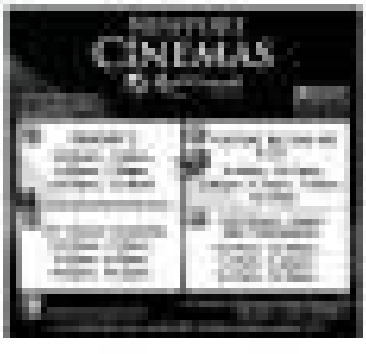
Free shows bri cheer to nine

Berlin-bound...

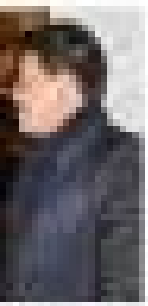




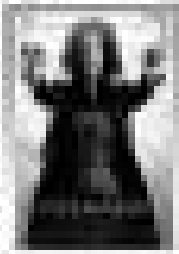




ng Christmas
Pagcor casinos



CINEMA



TOP GROSSERS AT THE PARADE. "Sinong" stars (left photo, from left) Jean Mamaio, Al-Al de los Reyes, Kyrie Manahan, Vic Sotto and Philip Salvador. "Pwedeng" stars (right photo from left): Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., Iza Calzado, Marian Rivera and Phillip Salvador

Network war reflected in MMFF first-day grosses

THE NETWORK war again made its presence felt in the Metro Manila Film Festival...spotlessly in the first day's box-office results on Christmas Day. The film companies of ABS-CBN (Star Cinema) and GMA 7 (GMA Films) are still vying for first place as previous Star Cinema's 96-for-96 "Sinong Mamamatay" with a slight lead over Regal's "Shake, Rattle and Roll 13" and "Sunday, Today and Tomorrow" are in the fifth and sixth spots. Rounding up the ranking is Viva/Kroma Entertainment's "Manila Kingpin: The Asiong Salonga Story" in seventh place.

This festival is showing a marked increase in grosses compared to last year's, according to Bic Camalig, member of the fest's executive committee. Dominic Ilo, also an executive member, told the bureau that the films posted a total of P107 million, a 19 percent increase from last year's P90.3 million first-day earnings. Bayani San Diego Jr.

OMB chief spends holidays running after movie pirates

AGAINST. Ricketts at work on Christmas day

By Marinel R. Cruz

OFFICIAL Media Board (OMB) Chair Ronnie Ricketts spent Christmas Day monitoring the 37th Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) opening and chanting down on movie pirates.

Working closely with the Motion Picture Antі-Film Piracy Council (MPAPC), Ricketts said his team arrested a man for attempting to record the festival entry "Sinong ng Mamamatay" at the Shangri-La Complex in Mandaluyong City on Dec. 25.

Ricketts said this was a violation of the Anti-Camcording Law which says, "any person caught using or attempting to use an audiovisual recording device to transmit or make a copy of any part of a performance in an exhibition facility of any cinematographic film or other audiovisual work will be fined from P50,000 to P250,000, face imprisonment of 6 minimum six months and one day to six years and one day."

The film's producer, Star Cinema, has been informed of the incident, Ricketts said. Inquirer.net entertainment on Monday.

He added: "We are pleased that theater owners are cooperating with us. We recently had a dialogue with them and we're glad they're complying with our suggestions."

Ricketts said three teams did the rounds of movie cinemas all day last Monday, "It was with one team. The operation was very limited. I'm confident that the MMFF will exceed its record P426-million box-office earnings last year."

The Metro Manila Development Authority hosts the annual film festival, which runs until Jan. 7. Proceeds from the two-week event will benefit the Movie Workers' Welfare Foundation (MowelFound), Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) and the MMFPC.

Extremely busy

"It's good that we're getting help from the anti-camcording group. For many years, we've been doing this on our own. The work is made easier when people cooperate," Ricketts said.

In 2009 former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo signed the Anti-Camcording Act, which banned the government's fight against movie piracy in the country. Tasked to ensure the laws are the OMB, Philippine National Police, National Bureau of Investigation and National Cinema Association of the Philippines (NCMP), theater owners and owners of cinematographic films or audiovisual works.

JURORS on the Marrakech stage: The Filipino filmmaker's (rightmost, first row) besides Hollywood actress Jessica Chastain (third row, second from right).

Berlin-bound Brillante has really gone global

Hobnobbing with H'wood A-listers, Pinoy filmmaker cements his standing in festival circuit

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

AFTER Venice and Cannes, Brillante Mendoza joins the main competition of Berlin, the third A-list festival in the international triumvirate, with "Captive," featuring French actress Isabelle Huppert and a Filipino cast led by Bernie Lucero, Raymond Bagatsing and Ed Lozano.

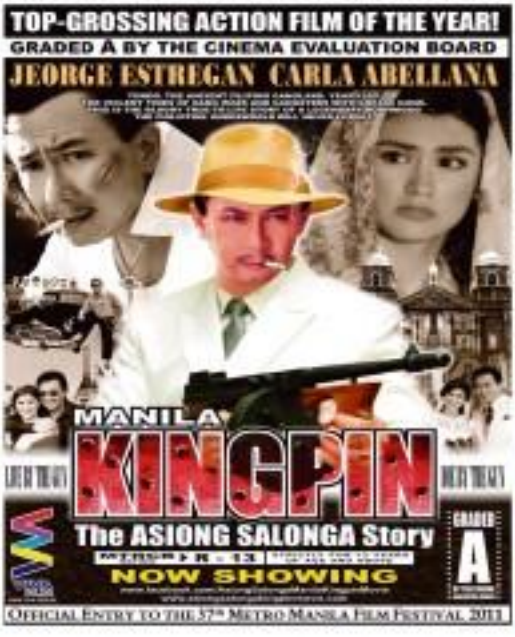
Mendoza previously competed in Cannes with "Serbis" and "Kinatay," winning best director for the latter in 2009. That same honour (yes, he entered "Lola" in Venice as the "surprise film.")

In February 2012, Mendoza solidifies his unique position as one of the most internationally esteemed directors in Philippine cinema history by competing in Berlin—the first Filipino filmmaker to do so since Mikael Salvaal (for "Sinaala") 20 years ago. In 2008, Mendoza brought home the Lifetime Achievement Award for "Tirador."

Mendoza is well aware of the significance of his coming trip to the German capital. He told the Inquirer, "It proves that Philippine cinema is here to stay!" (There's another Filipino film at the Berlinale this year, Raymund Ribay Gutierrez's "Nono" in the Generation Kplus section.)

"Festival gurus used to be just curious about Filipino films," he explained. "With these developments, we are building an audience for our films. My wish is for Filipino movies to soon be free on festival gurus' minds—in the same way that they perceive the cinemas of Korean films."

However, Mendoza was quick to point out that joining festivals is only the first step. "We shouldn't make films just for festivals. What we should aim for are a bigger audience and wider release in commercial theaters."

Berlin, he cogitated, is a major market attended by numerous distributors, producers and other top industry leaders. "If a film competes in A-list festivals like Berlin, Cannes and Venice, it can attract potential buyers from all over the world."

To illustrate Mendoza's "Lola," which topbilled Anita Linda and Rustica Carpio, had a commercial run in France last year. He related, "Lola' was also shown in eight cities in Brazil this year. It's the first time that a Filipino film